The Nation.

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MAR 5

EDITORIAL

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

He's smart, he's honest. He has a plan for resurrecting the economy. He keeps his promises. He's running against Washington. He may well be a she. And he's the strongest candidate in the race.

Who is this paragon? His name is None of the Above, although he goes by other appellations as well. Sometimes he's a Republican, sometimes a Democrat. NOTA showed strength in opinion polls even before the first primary. Under the sobriquet "Unnamed Democrat" he ran better against George Bush than Clinton, Kerrey et al. In his first test, New Hampshire, NOTA ran as a write-in for Ralph Nader, getting 2 percent overall; and also as Pat Buchanan, garnering 37 percent of the G.O.P. vote. Running as "Undecided" in South Dakota, NOTA drew 31 percent of the tally.

On the Democratic side NOTA is a more protean figure; some call him Jerry Brown, others Mario Cuomo or Larry Agran. But he's also had a greater, though more amorphous, impact. Nationally he's been a spoiler, denying any single candidate a clear front-runnership. So far, Democratic voters are still in "Undecided's" column.

Although he's waging a strong campaign, NOTA, like many outsiders, lacks money, organization, name recognition—the whole bag. His name doesn't appear on the ballot. His most pressing need is for a spin doctor, someone to proclaim victory and stoke the momentum.

Until NOTA gets his act together, we'll have to take over that role. O.K., media, listen up! Our guy is the candidate of the disfranchised, the left out, the turned off, the politically aware, the principled. Voters agree with his message: Bush's economic program is a phony, ditto Clinton/Tsongas's; Kerrey isn't putting money where his mouth is on health care; Harkin can't hack it, etc., etc. Above all, NOTA's the only candidate the voters trust. So climb on the bandwagon, folks! Don't waste your vote on that old party hack, Lesser Evil.

DE KLERK'S WHITE VETO
Mark Gevisser

HARLEQUIN ROMANCE SLAVES
Richard Pollak

ITALIANS CRY *BASTA!*
Frederika Randall

APPRENTICE PROGRAMS
Hannah Finan Roditi

RELUCTANT RADICAL
Vivian Gornick

KURT WOLFF, BOOKMAN
Lindsay Waters

EDITORIAL

IMPLANTS: TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES

KATHA POLLITT

The F.D.A. hearings into the safety of silicone gel breast implants have ended with a split recommendation by the advisory panel: Rejecting an outright ban on the devices, it urges that implantees be registered in clinical trials, to which only women who needed the surgery for reconstructive, not cosmetic, purposes would be guaranteed admittance. Which is it—"Panel Backs Marketing of Implants" (*The Washington Post*) or "Experts Suggest U.S. Sharply Limit Breast Implants" (*The New York Times*)? You be the judge.

Whatever else they were, the hearings were great theater. There was the perfidy of Dow (Napalm? Agent Orange? What's that?) Corning, the largest manufacturer of the implants, which was revealed to have lied and stonewalled for almost thirty years. There was the pious greed of plastic surgeons, who aggressively marketed the devices as a "cure" for "micromastia" (small breasts, to you) and now warn of an epidemic of "hysteria" in breast-enlarged women newly enlightened about the risks of autoimmune disorders, painful scarring, obscured mammograms. There was a hero, too, if a few decades late—David Kessler, the F.D.A.'s energetic new head. But most of all there were breasts—sex, beauty, fashion, women, women's bodies. Does anyone think the implant story would have been plastered all over the news media if it was about orthopedic shoes?

The real breast-implant story, though, isn't about women's bodies; it's about their minds. In the postfeminist wonderland in which we are constantly being told we live, women's lives are portrayed as one big smor-

(*Continued on Page 329*)

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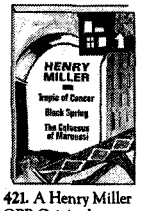

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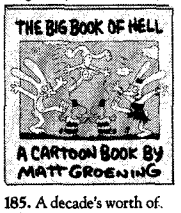

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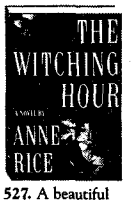

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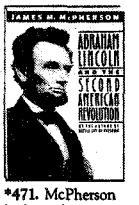

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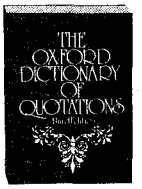

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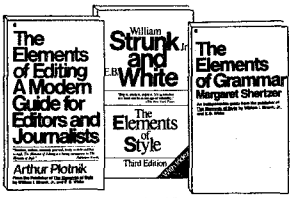
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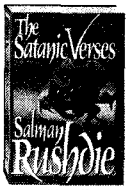

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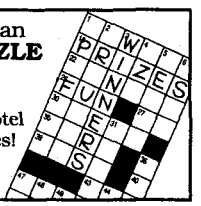

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A	■	O	■	I	■	I	■	T	■	M	■	M	■	A
C	O	W	L	S	■	N	O	T	E	P	A	P	E	R
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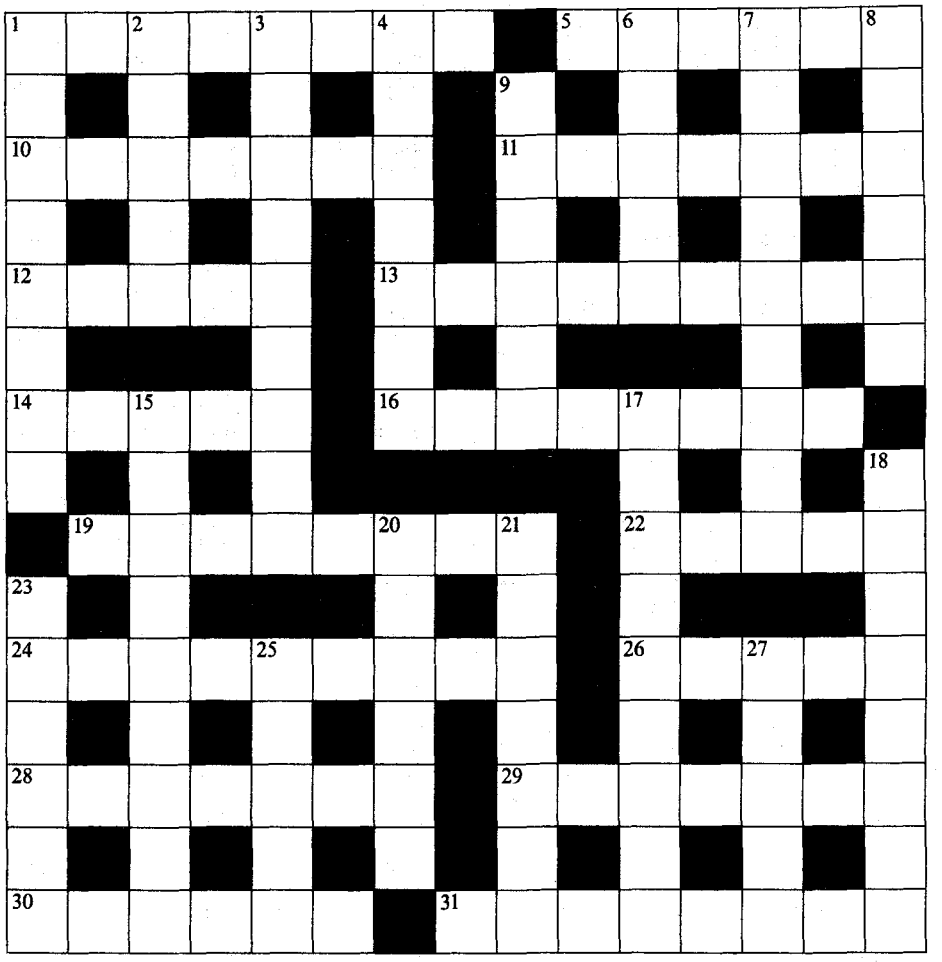
Crossword Puzzle No. 2373

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Dire loss in damaged men of war. (8)
5 See 3 down
10 A very quiet praise if one does so? (7)
11 There's something very sticky about lettuce that is sweet! (7)
12 The girl has a failing mark, but still makes quite a bundle! (5)
13 It is poetically pursued about which might be mildly punished. (9)
14 A short month, else the scenery and settings thereof. (5)
16 Try indeed! (You'll get hated for it.) (8)
19 Pertaining to the body of the article on what the bomb may be. (8)
22 Punishment equivalent to what one might use to encourage the sled dog? (5)
24 One who puts down a command to act more like Tom Thumb? (9)
26,28 and 29 See 3 down
30 My set's out of order, which may be how things are run. (6)
31 You can't use such eggs for an omelet, which describes a real winner! (8)

DOWN

1 Do pass us, possibly, if you're looking for what they used to wash. (8)
2 Making pleas for deviation from moral standard? (5)
3,and 29, 28 5 and 26 across Advice of the Bruce to the Judicial Branch when they keep bringing up lost causes? (2,2,5,3,4,7,3,3,5)
4 With such as Mussolini in debt, made smaller. (7)
6 and 27 Get up a boxing match for the dock laborer. (10)
7 Does such a get-up demand altaration? (9)
8 Having trouble with the lid? Yes but you'll find it gives eventually. (6)
9 A ghat's not very unusual, but shocking things make one appear so. (6)
15 A common prisoner, a French policeman and a Heavenbound saint find strong disagreements. (9)
17 Put down your name on a not exactly true composition you might be asked to put it on the line. (9)
18 Part of the political agenda carries a lot of weight with very little ones at sea. (8)
20 Momwoman? It's enough to make you sick! (6)
21 A tray is used to this, as are the British, somewhat. (5,2)
23 What might carry travelers in a sea-storm roughs things up. (6)
25 Subject of an article on an important part of egocentricity. (5)
27 See 6 down

PUZZLE BOOK

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pected political benefits." [Emphasis added.]

Testifying before the Watergate committee in April 1974, Malek tried to distance himself from that paper, saying the objective of the responsiveness program was merely to insure that the Administration got credit for its actions. But other, equally disturbing papers and memos over Malek's own signature were harder to disavow.

In a memo to H.R. Haldeman dated March 17, 1972, Malek wrote enthusiastically about the potential for "rechanneling" large amounts of taxpayer money "to impact more directly on target groups or geographic areas" of key interest to the campaign. In the Commerce Department alone, he bragged, the responsiveness team had already requested special treatment on thirty-five pending grants. "A dozen of these requests resulted in favorable grant decisions (which otherwise would not have been made)," he wrote. "Politically, these actions have been most beneficial."

Another memo to Haldeman says, "We garnered from reliable sources in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission that the commission was preparing to sue the University of Texas for discrimination in hiring of faculty. . . . If such a suit took place, the result would be a serious negative impact in a key state. . . . When queried, Bill Brown, chairman of the E.E.O.C., agreed not to pursue it."

A Watergate committee staff report identified Malek as one of four White House officials behind the Federation of Experienced Americans, a quasi-social service agency created during the election year to boost Nixon's popularity among the elderly. Senate investigators found that the Office of Economic Opportunity had been ordered by the White House to kick in $400,000 for the F.E.A. Soon afterward, the fledgling organization was awarded a $1.5 million Labor Department grant, determined by a General Accounting Office audit to have been "processed outside normal procedures" with "substantial White House backing." Meanwhile, funds to the National Councils on Aging and of Senior Citizens—both considered "enemies" of the President—were sharply reduced.

In an April 1974 hearing before the Watergate committee, Malek was asked several times whether he felt his responsiveness campaign had violated Title 18, Section 595 of the United States Code, which makes it illegal for a government employee with jurisdiction over grants "to use his authority for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the nomination or election of any candidate for the office of the President." Malek's response: "I'm not a lawyer."

The committee didn't buy it. In an internal memo, committee staff called the responsiveness program "one of the potentially most dangerous activities discovered by the committee" and said Malek had arguably committed a prosecutable offense—conspiracy to defraud the United States. But then Nixon resigned, and Malek resigned, returned to the private sector and was never prosecuted. Not long after resigning, Malek told the *New York Post* the only thing he and others in the responsiveness program had done wrong was to "commit too much of our thinking to paper."

If that's the lesson Malek took away from the episode, we can imagine how he is using the power of the incumbency to bolster his candidate's prospects for re-election twenty years later. And we wonder why the media have played down, missed or ignored such damning information about the top man on Bush's campaign team. In 1988, while the A.D.L. dismissed the revelations about the Jewish list as ancient history, the controversy prompted a slew of righteous editorials, including one in *The Boston Globe* headlined "Where's the Outrage?" The question applies again today. JULIE COHEN

Julie Cohen is a radio reporter in New York City.

Implants

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

gasbord of "choices" and "options," all value free and freely made, and which therefore cannot be challenged or even discussed, lest one sound patronizing or moralistic. Thus, women "choose" to have implants, we are told, to please men—no, wait, to boost their self-esteem—and who are you to criticize their judgment? But choice implies awareness of possible consequences, precisely what implantees were denied. And self-esteem does not occur in a vacuum but in response to social pressures and rewards.

The language of options is seductive because it sounds so much like freedom and mutual respect. Even feminists fall for it: A few years back, *Ms.* ran a favorable article about Cher's total-body remake, and I seem to be the only person who thinks Jane Fonda's breast implants constitute false advertising both for her politics and her workout business. But the F.D.A. hearings show where the refusal to analyze the actual content of individual decisions ends up: in mutilated bodies and malpractice suits.

The next time medicine comes up with a cure for the "disease" of being female, let's let guinea pigs be the guinea pigs.

★

Some Advice For The President

It always seemed to me to be essential
For Presidents to act, well, presidential—
As Reagan did, with style I'm not pooh-poohing,
Though acting was, in fact, what he was doing.
But Bush, especially when he thinks he's trailing,
Believes plain folks respond to hyper flailing.
So now, when he starts speaking to a group, he
Begins to act and sound a lot like Snoopy.
I think that he'd be likelier to woo us
By being more like Ron, not Jerry Lewis.

Calvin Trillin

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

The Rhodes Scholarships at Oxford University were set up with the deliberate purpose of advancing the white imperial idea, and especially the Atlanticist version of it. (See, for an extended treatment of this strangely neglected topic, my strangely neglected *Blood, Class, and Nostalgia: Anglo-American Ironies*.) So it was rather a privilege to be at Oxford during the brief space in the late 1960s when the American cousins were less, rather than more, reactionary and clubby than the rest of the ancient institution. I remember the Bill Clinton set in Leckford Road, home base of the concerned Americans. (The rest of us on the left were very impressed that these guys had their own duplicating machine for the swift production of leaflets and bulletins.) Together we marched in the Vietnam War Moratorium parade, where I had the honor of being the speaker. Together we grilled visiting American Congressmen and members of the military-academic complex. Together we raised funds for the support of draft evaders and for the relief of the numberless Vietnamese victims, who still have no memorial. I didn't personally know Clinton, but I knew some in his circle. One of them, a super-serious youth named Ira Magaziner who is now a Clinton campaign adviser, once got me into trouble without knowing it. A telephone message in my shared home read "RING IRA," and alas was still on the table when the cops came round on some bovine errand. I had to waste hours convincing them that I wasn't trying to unify Ireland by force that week.

So I read Clinton's 1969 Vietnam letter with keen interest. Obviously wasted on the colonel to whom it was addressed, it breathes with much of the spirit of those most defensible of days. A lot came back to me when I saw that Clinton had written of "working every day against a war I opposed and despised with a depth of feeling I had reserved solely for racism in America before Vietnam." Even more came back to me when I saw the objection to having to "fight and kill and die" in such a war, with the verbs (as Todd Gitlin pointed out) not only in the right order but repeated as "fight, kill and maybe die" lower down. Anyone who believes that the objection of antiwar activists was to personal danger rather than to complicity in atrocity and aggression just wasn't there at the time.

Also redolent of the period was Clinton writing, "I decided to accept the draft in spite of my beliefs for one reason: to maintain my political viability within the system." "Within the system" is vintage 1960s, but now I wonder. Who else of that band of brave and cheerful young Americans, so apparently selfless in their opposition to their country's disgrace, was asking, "How will this play in New Hampshire in around 1992?" The thought gives me the creeps, though perhaps it shouldn't. Someone had to be thinking about the long haul, I suppose. But I would bet a goodly sum that most of those concerned were not planning much beyond the downfall of Richard Nixon. A calculating young man this Clinton, at any event.

How dismal it is to realize that the standard for the Vietnam generation is now at the level of "What did you do in the Great War, Daddy?" Nobody asks how people *thought* about the war, or what they did to stop it. Worse still, the dumb single-issue question is not being asked by the "stab in the back" faction, which believes the war was lost by the press, the liberals, the faggots, etc. (No "stab in the back" movement ever did emerge with any seriousness, if only because Saigon was evacuated, under shameful conditions, on Nixon's watch, thus robbing the "Who lost Vietnam?" question of its complementary demagogy.) Instead, the question of who did and did not serve has been raised by liberals. It began with James Fallows's essay in *The Atlantic* some years back, where he intruded the matter of class and argued that, absent the *jeunesse dorée*, the war had to be fought by farm boys and blacks. I distinctly remember making this point about the draft, as did the whole of the antiwar movement and in particular the much-forgotten G.I. Coffee House and G.I. counseling groups, and I don't remember any other occasion on which a neoliberal like Fallows has felt compelled to stress that America is a class society.

Other liberals began crying before they had been hurt, and strove to pre-empt accusations of cowardice and want of patriotism. In a whole series of pieces, Jack Newfield in *The Village Voice* went after what he crudely called the chicken hawks, the right-wing drum-bangers who had either dodged the war or invented a record in it. Then came Dan Quayle, and a great cry of "gotcha" from the massed ranks of the right-thinking media. The fools. By the time the jeering had died down, the conservatives had a new standard: Did you go to Vietnam or didn't you? If it's sauce for Quayle, it's sauce for everybody. So we had the degrading contortion of "supporting the troops but not the war" in the Persian Gulf, and the no less cringe-making elevation of Senator Bob Kerrey for no better reason than that he had believed Richard Nixon until it cost him a limb.

The objection to Clinton ought to be that he is now ashamed of the fine paragraphs in his letter as well as the shifty ones. After all this time, and all the evidence about the conduct of the war, he apparently wishes that he could have borne arms in Vietnam, and perhaps brought back a medal or two. He should be faced with the same proposition that must be confronted by others who yearn for the "moral authority" of the experience. You picture yourself coming back, perhaps slightly but honorably wounded, with mature reservations that can be cashed in for ethical credit. Do you ever picture yourself taking part in Operation Speedy Express or the Phoenix program, or wading into My Lai on March 16, 1968? Never mind your own skin for a second; how about being forced to murder people who have done you no harm? Those who did do this, and those who made them do it and lied about the business, are the ones who should be arraigned and questioned. But so wonderful is the exercise of liberal masochism that it has decided to take the whole punishment on itself. Oh well, I suppose it *was* the liberals' war.

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WATCHING RIGHTS.

ARYEH NEIER

It is now a year since the Kurds and the Shiites of Iraq rose up in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, and the Iraqi government brutally forced hundreds of thousands to flee for their lives to Iran and Turkey. Although the plight of the Kurds, particularly those on the Turkish border, was big news for a time, like the victims of many other conflicts their moment in the spotlight of world attention was brief. In June, if all goes according to current plan, the United Nations will withdraw from Iraqi Kurdistan—where a haven, or security zone, for the Kurds was established in April 1991—and the government of Saddam Hussein will resume control of the region.

For the 3.5 million or so Kurds living in the security zone, that must be a terrifying prospect. They have been trying for years to tell the world about the horrors they have suffered from Iraqi forces, but it is only in the period since their uprising that even they have learned many of the details.

At the time of the uprising, *peshmerga*, or Kurdish guerrillas, overran the offices of Iraqi security agencies and of the Baath Party in several cities. To their astonishment they found that the Iraqis had kept meticulous records of their crimes against the Kurds between 1985 and 1989. The records included great numbers of memorandums identifying the victims by name, as well as videotapes showing everything from poison gas attacks to torture sessions. Middle East Watch has obtained copies of some of these records from the *peshmerga* and is in the process of assembling a comprehensive archive. The documents will be analyzed in cooperation with Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

What follows is a translated excerpt from one captured memorandum, dated October 29, 1988, from the Directorate of Security of Sulaimaniyah to the Assistant Director of Operations for the Autonomous Region:

> Greetings—
>
> Referring to the telephone conversation, we list hereunder the required surveys:
>
> First: (9) criminal members of enemy groups, executed by this directorate according to the approval of the esteemed North Organization Bureau [of the Ba'ath Party].
>
> Second: (19) accused, executed by this directorate because of their presence in the Security-prohibited village and according to the cable from North Organization Security 4008 on 20/June/1988, paragraph (5) thereof.
>
> Third: (6) families numbering (18) persons, relatives of the criminals mentioned in "First" above, executed by this directorate, according to directions from the esteemed North Organization Bureau.
>
> Fourth: (47) accused members of the enemy groups were referred to the Revolutionary Court for investigation and were sentenced to death.
>
> Fifth: (2532) persons and (1869) families numbering (6030) persons were sent to the Popular Army Camp in Ta'amim Governorate. These were arrested during the heroic "Al Anfal" Operation.

Six months before the invasion of Kuwait, Middle East Watch published a report titled "Human Rights in Iraq" (later issued as a book by Yale University Press), which discussed what was then known about the abuses directed against the Kurds. It noted that the Iraqi government began its most recent program of forced resettlement of the Kurds in 1985. Because of the secrecy with which the government shrouded the operation, the number of people involved was not clear, but the report cited estimates of "at least 500,000 and maybe higher." Meanwhile, evidence showed that some 4,000 Kurdish villages had been wiped out during this campaign, and that poison gas had been used by the Iraqis not only in the town of Halabja in 1988 but also on a previous occasion. Many of the Kurds who had been forcibly relocated could not be accounted for. What had become of them?

Through a review of the captured Iraqi documents, the fate of the missing Kurds is being resolved. Many were never resettled; they were murdered. In December, Middle East Watch and Physicians for Human Rights sent a team of scientists led by forensic anthropologist Clyde Snow to Iraqi Kurdistan to exhume bodies, identify them and determine the probable causes, manner and dates of death. What it found from only a few sample graves was telling: skeletons of young men, still clothed, with a single gunshot to the head; one skull bearing a blindfold; a skeleton of a young woman who had been hanged.

'Anfal': a name sanctifying Iraqi atrocities against the Kurds

A young Kurd named Taymur, now 15, has supplied additional evidence about the killings of his people. In 1988 Taymur was herded into a pit with his family and many other people and shot in the back. He alone survived. His wounds and his story are all that is available to document this episode, which took place in territory still under Iraqi control.

One of the most chilling aspects of the Iraqi campaign is the name it was given: "Anfal." The word is from the Koran and refers to booty obtained in raids against infidels. The implication is that what was done to the Kurds was legitimate; indeed, that it was sanctified.

The Anfal campaign seems to have been motivated at least in part by Saddam's conviction that the Kurds had betrayed Iraq by siding with Iran in the prolonged and bloody war between the two countries. No doubt, the *peshmerga* did attempt to exploit the war for the purpose of establishing an independent Kurdistan. Perhaps in reprisal, the most intense phase of the Anfal campaign was launched against the Kurds as the war ended. Ali Hassan al-Majid, a cousin of Saddam Hussein (known as "Ali Chemical" by the Kurds), was decorated for his effective conduct of the campaign and, a few months ago, appointed Defense Minister.

If Iraqi Kurdistan reverts to the control of the Iraqi government, the Kurds will once again be subject to Saddam Hussein and Ali Chemical. Before that is allowed to happen, it is urgent that the world learn about the Anfal campaign.

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ARTICLES.

TOWARD A NEW SOUTH AFRICA—II

Giving Whites The Veto

MARK GEVISSER

Johannesburg

A few thousand votes in a rural Transvaal by-election threaten to change the course of South African history: The right-wing Conservative Party's (C.P.) landslide victory in Potchefstroom, previously a safe National Party seat, has thrown this country into its most serious political crisis since negotiations between the African National Congress and the government began. As a result of his party's defeat, President F.W. de Klerk has announced a referendum, to be held on March 17, in which whites will decide if they want the negotiating process to continue. If they say no, de Klerk will resign and call a general election.

Only one week before, de Klerk was the very model of cheery optimism. How strange that he should allow 9,000 reactionary voters in a western Transvaal backwater to bring him to the brink of resignation. Both the A.N.C. and the Conservative Party believe he is panicking and acting rashly, but it is more likely that the South African President has cleverly engineered the Potchefstroom defeat to his own advantage, using it to call a referendum that could squelch the growing C.P. by rallying whites against the sheer horror of a national C.P. victory, which would return South Africa to the dark days of apartheid, armed struggle and international isolation. De Klerk, his admirers insist, would never call a referendum if he thought he might lose.

But South Africa's Gorbachev is undoubtedly in trouble. When he opened a disempowered white Parliament in late January, he tried to woo both the far right and the A.N.C. He failed on both counts. For the A.N.C.'s benefit, he announced his plans for a democratically elected transitional government to be put in place by the end of the year. For the far right's benefit, he implied that this transitional government would give "political minorities" (read whites) some veto mechanism, and—almost as an afterthought—that he would place the issue of "self-determination" (read white separatism) on the agenda at Codesa, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa, which is this country's negotiating table. For the far right's further benefit, de Klerk reiterated that there would be a referendum to approve Codesa's decisions in which votes would be counted by race.

De Klerk's tragedy—which became painfully manifest with the Potchefstroom debacle—is that neither suitor has accepted his proposal, precisely because the other has also been courted. There is a growing opinion in the A.N.C. that the President's overtures to the right wing are anything but sops. They are evidence rather that the government is using a belligerent right wing as its excuse for retarding the process of change, and hence has still not accepted the naked fact that it will have to relinquish power.

But even if they are more than sops, the far right too is having none of them. Indeed, as it grows dramatically in support, the Conservative Party remains resolute in its vow to stay outside Codesa. De Klerk's clear intention to split the party (there are prominent C.P. leaders in favor of joining Codesa) seems to have failed, and white rage is now on the rampage. The C.P. won the Potchefstroom by-election on an antinegotiations, back-to-apartheid platform, and immediately following the victory, C.P. leader Andries Treurnicht claimed the ruling National Party no longer represented "the white nation" at Codesa.

In direct response to Treurnicht's taunts and the C.P.'s victory, de Klerk has changed tack on the referendum issue. Instead of holding it after Codesa comes up with a transitional package, he wants it now, before he goes any further with negotiations. Whites must decide now whether they wish him to continue with the negotiations process, for de Klerk feels that the longer he waits, the more the C.P. will "undermine" this process. "This is something that must be settled," he declared to Parliament the day after the by-election. "If I lose the referendum, I will resign, and you can have an election."

But is this a canny threat calculated to bring his silent supporters out in droves, or is it rashness? We must remember that Potchefstroom is the home of de Klerk's alma mater, the fiercely conservative Potchefstroom University. It is Afrikaner heartland, and the South African President's response shows him to be as much of an Afrikaner as ever. Never mind that the vast majority of the country wants him to stay—if the *volk* reject him, he'll pack his bags. Perhaps by holding the whole negotiations process hostage because of a few thousand Afrikaner votes against him in the heartland, the South African President proves an allegation often made against him by the A.N.C.: that his allegiance to the *volk* remains greater than his allegiance to his own vision of a new South Africa. At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, before the Potchefstroom vote, de Klerk had proclaimed that the process of change was "irreversible." But by giving white voters the right to veto the process in a referendum, de Klerk has ceded to them the right to reverse it.

"Only when right-wing whites realize that the process is truly irreversible," comments A.N.C. Head of Research and negotiator Frene Ginwala, "will they join it in an attempt to protect their interests, just as they did in Zimbabwe and Namibia. But what this referendum is telling them is that they have a way of stopping the process outside the negotiating room. No wonder they're not coming in."

Johannesburg *Weekly Mail* political editor Philip van Niekerk took the opposite view. He wrote in early February that "by keeping the door open for a constitutional reversal, de Klerk is delaying the day that right-wing whites—with the exception of a few crazies—will feel that there is no option open for them but violent rebellion." Van Niekerk feels that de Klerk might be deliberately using the referendum issue to

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Mark Gevisser, a freelance writer based in Johannesburg, writes regularly for The Weekly Mail.

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keep the C.P. preoccupied with the "relatively harmless task" of organizing by-elections around a referendum, thereby keeping them from turning to more violent means that could surely derail the whole process.

National Party strategists still believe the real threat to constitutional change remains outside parliamentary politics, not in the dour, play-by-the-rules demeanor of Treurnicht's C.P. but in the heavily armed neo-Nazi groups, which are ready for action, having brilliantly and ironically adopted the system of underground cells that the A.N.C. devised in the 1960s. The danger lies not simply in the fact that these men are "armed and dangerous" but that they count in their ranks an unknown but substantial number of former security-force personnel who have intimate knowledge of this country's strategic pressure points and weaknesses.

At the same time he uses the referendum to keep the militarized far right at bay, de Klerk could, in fact, actually turn the Potchefstroom defeat into a powerful bargaining tool at Codesa. A week before the by-election, the National Party candidate, Theuns Krüger, said his defeat might bring about a quicker compromise from the A.N.C., for it would give de Klerk the clear evidence he needs that the growing right wing must be assuaged. So it is not impossible that the National Party deliberately lost Potchefstroom (where it mounted a decidedly lackluster campaign) in order to increase its bargaining power at Codesa, to force the issue of a whites-only referendum and to rally white supporters against the dark possibility of a C.P. government.

On the same day that de Klerk announced the referendum, the A.N.C. issued a statement slamming it. "A whites-only referendum," the statement read, "is not only the hallmark of racism but also has the effect of delaying peace and justice for all our people." Ginwala points out that "apartheid was about whites deciding the future of this country. That's exactly what a white referendum does. So how can we believe the government when it says apartheid is dead and the process of change is irreversible?"

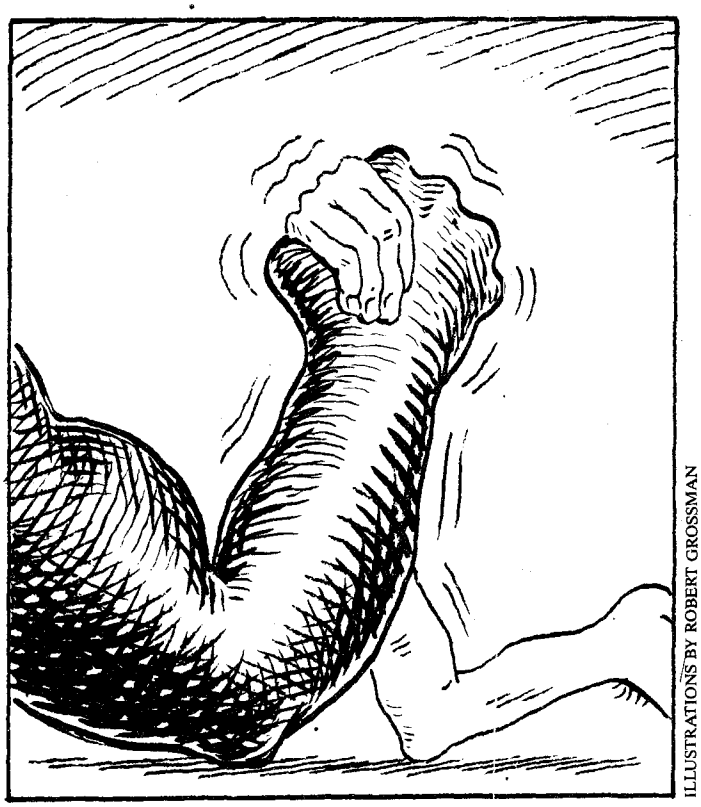
Although it does not publicly admit it, the A.N.C. is in a quandary as to how to respond to de Klerk's move. There is, for example, a growing acceptance among the pragmatists in the Congress of the idea that the only way of calming—and even defusing—the white right is by holding a whites-only referendum. "Certainly," comments a senior A.N.C. negotiator, "we understand de Klerk's dilemma. And a separate white referendum is one way of neutralizing belligerence among whites, for it could demonstrate that, even if they win in a place like Potchefstroom, those opposed to change are a significant minority." But most A.N.C. leaders still remain opposed to the referendum on principle—not only because it gives whites an effective veto but because it could backfire terribly. If the Potchefstroom defeat is in fact an accurate barometer rather than a rural aberration, de Klerk could well lose the referendum, and the new South Africa could find itself stalemated.

Wryly inverting the old colonial language of "the native problem," A.N.C. officials now talk of "the white problem." But the rage of the white right is not the only thing that could snag negotiations. The other major immediate dilemma is radical divergence in views on what the new South Africa should look like. The A.N.C. wants a unitary, centralized state, but the National Party calls for a loose federation with strong regional authority: "Effective participation by political minorities" is the current Natspeak.

The political agendas behind these two proposals are transparent. While the A.N.C. claims that its model is essential if this divided country is to be fashioned into a common society, it clearly understands that, since it would win an election hands down, a unified system along simple majoritarian principles would deal it the most power. The government, on the other hand, knows that it would be much easier for whites to hold on to power in the different regional divisions of a federation.

Perhaps more important, the government still hopes to use the carrot of federalism to woo back into its camp the bantustan leaders and the Indian and "colored" parties represented in the tricameral legislature. "Yes, of course we are worried about the fact that the A.N.C. seems to have more support than we do in Codesa," comments a back-room National Party strategist at the Convention, "but it won't take long for the parties from the homelands and the tricameral houses to realize that their future lies with a federal system. For with a unitary system, they'll have no power—the A.N.C. will have it all." Already, the government's federal option can count on the support of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party and President Lucas Mangope's Bophuthatswana government, and it is becoming clearer that conservative majorities in the Indian and colored communities will favor it too.

But no matter who manages to win the floating vote at Codesa, the two major players will have to agree before the Convention can reach a final decision. Codesa could decide to



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT GROSSMAN

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put the issue of a future constitution on hold and leave it up to the transitional government to deal with, but both sides—especially the A.N.C.—adamantly insist that they will not go into a transitional government without knowing what lies on the other side. That means the unitarism/federalism debate must be resolved before a transitional government can even be spoken about. The highly emotional issues of the security forces and the reincorporation of the independent "homelands" (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei) must also be resolved. When the Codesa working groups began meeting last month, major progress was made when three of these four independent black homelands—Transkei, Venda and Ciskei—stated on record that they wish to be reincorporated. But apartheid's inventors have created a banana republic Frankenstein in Lucas Mangope, who at the instigation of a core of ex-Rhodesian advisers around him, and despite major pressure from the South African government, still refuses reincorporation.

Within Codesa, both Mangope and Buthelezi promise to be the most destructive spanners in the works. Inkatha is being particularly obstructive: Chief Buthelezi refused to attend Codesa I in December because Zulu King Goodwill Zwelethini was excluded. Buthelezi's Inkatha party held up the meeting with endless niggling over details, and it has submitted a constitutional proposal wildly at odds with those of both the government and the A.N.C. The "Inkathagate" revelations last July and more recent proof of close collaboration between Inkatha and the security forces have wholly discredited the former, proving it to be nothing more than an invention of the apartheid regime. Why, then, is Codesa putting up with Buthelezi's nonsense?

The answer lies on the ground, where the endemic violence in the townships around Johannesburg over the past eighteen months has proved that, despite Inkatha's lack of support outside Natal (polls put it at less than 2 percent), it has the power to wreak havoc, destabilize the A.N.C. and cripple any chances of peaceful democracy. The government—which gave Inkatha this power by training and arming its soldiers and then helped consolidate it by refusing to act against it—might well be regretting this, but the fact that Inkatha is holding the whole country hostage could (perhaps not unsurprisingly) work in the National Party's favor. Buthelezi has made it clear that what he wants is regional power in Natal. If this is the only way of defusing him, then perhaps the A.N.C. will have to look more closely at a federal system.

Certainly, the A.N.C. and the National Party could find a compromise on the unitarism/federalism issue. They could also agree on a transitional government measure before the end of the year. Inkatha could be "bought" with some promise of regional power in Natal. A free and fair referendum in Bophuthatswana could depose Mangope. De Klerk could win his referendum and marginalize the right wing.

But will the power-hungry Buthelezi be content to stop at limited power in Natal when de Klerk has already all but promised him some kind of leadership in a ruling "troika" with himself and Mandela? Can either the A.N.C. or the government compromise on their models for the future without losing the support of their respective constituencies?

And even with the highly likely possibility of a "yes" vote for de Klerk, will the "few crazies" who are hellbent on fighting the Boer War all over again peacefully lay down their arms? When the National Party came to power for the first time in 1948, and when white South Africans voted in 1961 to leave the British Commonwealth, it was said that "the Afrikaner won through the ballot box what he had lost on the battlefield." How many Afrikaners will go back to the battlefield if they lose through the ballot box now? □

WHAT'S IN A PSEUDONYM?

Romance Slaves Of Harlequin

RICHARD POLLAK

For the hundreds of women yearning to burst into print as writers of romance fiction, Harlequin Enterprises thoughtfully supplies guidelines with some helpful hints. One of them is that the plots of these paperback passionaries "should not be too grounded in harsh realities." Before counting their royalties, however, would-be authors might want to look into the harsh realities of dealing with Harlequin—in particular its insistence that writers use pseudonyms.

Ostensibly, these pen names merely give the romance novel an extra fillip of mystery and titillation, like the titles (*Savage Promise*; *Creole Fires*) and the covers depicting bodice-bursting maidens gazing amorously into the eyes of hunks in various states of dress and undress. In fact, the pseudonym requirement is a Harlequin ploy aimed at keeping its stable of writers strictly tethered to the corporate hitching post. "Today," says Anita Diamant, a New York literary agent who represents some twenty romance writers, "I can't get a contract from [Harlequin] unless the author agrees to select a pseudonym."

Once a writer signs the contract, Harlequin takes the position that the pseudonym belongs to the company, something it could never do if the author wrote under her real name. Harlequin, a subsidiary of Canada's billion-dollar Torstar media conglomerate, has almost 1,000 writers here and abroad churning out about sixty novels a month. Since Harlequin Enterprises controls an estimated 80 percent of the romance fiction market, these women challenge the company at considerable risk.

Not long ago, one agent pressed Harlequin on what in recent months has become the most contentious aspect of the pseudonym issue: reversion of rights. Most publishers, once a book is out of print, routinely allow the rights to revert to the author after a number of months. But, except in a very few cases, Harlequin Enterprises has refused to grant reversion of rights unless the author agrees not to use her pseudonym at another publisher, thus denying her the bargaining power the pen name may have gained because of the popularity of her books.

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When the agent threatened to complain publicly about Harlequin's tactics, the company said it would cancel all Harlequin books with that agent. When the agent persisted, the company terminated the contracts of several of the agent's authors, whose manuscripts had been accepted and who were due to be paid. Harlequin also told the agent that all other agency authors would be frozen out from then on. The agent "was practically in tears," recalls Maria Pallante, a lawyer and assistant director of The Authors Guild, which is investigating Harlequin's pseudonym practices. Pallante said she has talked with some two dozen romance writers and their agents and "there has been a shocking level of fear."

In 1990 Harlequin sold 194 million books worldwide.

Such is the climate of fear engendered by Harlequin's clout that no one is willing to talk about the company except on deep background. So pray indulge me, reader, if I invent a composite heroine whose plight, I assure you, is representative of many romance authors. Her real name doesn't matter because it doesn't sell books. Under the pen name Desirée Halston, she has written some fifty successful romances for a publisher that, on advice of counsel, I shall call Slapstick Press. Her *oeuvre* includes such shopping-mall blockbusters as *Hot, Stolen Kisses*, *Fire and Ice*, *Desert Lust*, *Secrets of the Casbah* and *Savage Passion*.

Her career is one of those success stories that inspire hundreds of ambitious writers everywhere. But even a star like Desirée, with her considerable bargaining power, learns that she who challenges the company does so at her peril.

Desirée's sin is to request that the rights to twenty-five of her books revert to her. An innocent enough demand, one might think. They're all out of print, so the company's not doing anything with them. But Slapstick adamantly refuses. At first it is avuncular: Why, we know what's best for your career, little lady. But spunky Desirée refuses to back down. So then the company ripples its muscles, like one of her beefy heroes, and launches a series of escalating threats. The message is clear: Unless she knuckles under she will never publish with Slapstick again. Furthermore, if she moves to another publisher, she is forbidden to take her pseudonym with her. The name Desirée Halston would live on—on Slapstick books written by another writer.

Such, at least, is the fate that awaits a Slapstick author who dares cross the street to another publisher. Usually, however, says a source familiar with other such cases in real life, the company has only to threaten the rebellious writers with termination and they cave in immediately.

Harlequin—like Zebra, Avon, Dell, Bantam and other smaller players in the romance field—pays advances ranging from $2,000 to $3,000 to beginners to around $15,000 for established writers. If a book sells, an author can earn as much as $40,000 in royalties. But in most cases, that's all. Almost all romance fiction comes off the racks after a month to make way for the next wave of desire. Romance writers who want to bring in a six-figure income must turn out at least three successful books a year, and a few do.

The heroines of this genre are women like Heather Graham, who has written sixty books in the past nine years (most recently, *Damsel in Distress* and *Bride of the Wild*). She uses her own name when writing for Dell, the pseudonym Shannon Drake at Avon and the pen name Heather Graham Pozzessere for Harlequin's Silhouette series. In 1982, when Graham began writing romances, she, her husband and their five small children were jammed into a frame house near the Miami airport. Graham began spending five to eight hours a day at the word processor, and now the family owns a large home in Coral Gables, Florida, and a mansion near Worcester, Massachusetts, a Greek Revival with twelve rooms, wood-burning fireplaces and two ballrooms.

Despite this romantic journey, Graham and others like her remain largely invisible outside their own literary subculture. Romance fiction is sold mostly on newsstands or by mail order, rather than in bookstores, and *The New York Times*'s and other best-seller lists disdain the genre, though it accounts for 35 percent of all paperback sales. So the great dream of most women writers in the field is to make the leap to what the publishing trade calls "women's fiction," to write longer, hard-cover books and become the next Danielle Steel, who started out writing romance fiction and now can usually be found near or at the top of the best-seller ladder. "Danielle reportedly pulls down an income of $25 million," observes *Romantic Times* in its March issue. "She makes this money writing in a little closet of a room, wearing a jogging suit and her diamonds."

Romantic Times is a monthly valentine to the women writing or reading romance fiction, a compendium of advertisements and reviews, interlarded with gossip ("Sylvie Sommerfield had a fire in her living room. . . . By the way, BITTERSWEET, Sylvie's latest Warner release, is selling well") and fanzine profiles of successful authors like Heather Graham, complete with bibliographies and addresses for fan mail. From April 30 through May 4, the faithful will gather in Savannah, Georgia, for *R.T.*'s tenth annual book-lovers' convention. There will be the usual how-to panels ("Indians to Know and Love: The Writing of an Indian Romance"), but given the current controversy, perhaps the most useful session will be on handling legal clauses in contracts.

Harlequin gained its lock on the romance market largely because the antitrust division of the Reagan Justice Department looked the other way in 1985 while the Canadians embraced Simon & Schuster's Silhouette Books. In 1990 Harlequin Enterprises grossed $302 million in sales and almost $50 million in operating profits from its two smoothly meshed pulp mills, selling 194 million books in some 100 markets worldwide and in more than twenty languages. This year, the company has launched a twelve-title series aimed at palpitating hearts in Europe's Common Market, with each book set in a different country. ("Yes," *The Economist* was moved to note, "even Belgium.")

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But it is not only Harlequin's worldwide reach and near monopoly that give it sway over its authors. The company knows—and so do its writers—that there are plenty of unpublished women (and a few men) breathless for a chance to see their passionate prose in print, to see their pseudonyms on a Harlequin series, whether in the demure Romance line (in which writers are told to avoid "explicit sexual description") or the racier Temptation books ("love scenes should be highly erotic, realistic and fun").

Many of these would-be authors, and some published ones, belong to Romance Writers of America, which has about 4,000 members. The R.W.A. board appears unwilling to challenge Harlequin on the pseudonym issue, in part, possibly, because board members get special treatment from Harlequin's editors. This coziness has angered some state chapters and prompted letters to the board and to The Authors Guild complaining that members' opposition to Harlequin's pseudonym policy is not being represented by the board.

Novelists Inc., which represents about 300 established romance writers and was formed in 1989 because R.W.A. wasn't addressing the needs of the published writers, is squarely behind the guild's investigation of Harlequin's pseudonym tactics. So are two high-profile writers, who have enough courage—and money—at least to hire lawyers to try and protect their pen names, but who nonetheless remain fearful of going public at this stage in the battle.

Harlequin maintains it is the company that promotes and sustains the pseudonyms and that if authors were allowed to take their pen names to another publisher, Harlequin would lose money and its carefully nurtured market would dry up. Whether this is true or not, The Authors Guild's position is essentially, "So what? That's the market in action." Pallante, a guild lawyer, points out that other publishers take the same risk every day with their authors who use pen names. If Stephen King decided to move from Viking to, say, Random House, he doubtless would have no trouble taking his pseudonym, Richard Bachman, with him.

Harlequin has threatened to convert its contracts to "work for hire" if its authors keep making a fuss over pseudonyms. As matters now stand, authors own the copyrights on their books and receive royalties of 6 percent on sales. But under work-for-hire agreements, writers would be paid a flat fee for their manuscripts, would not own the copyright and would get no royalties, however well their books sold. Some romance writers and their agents think that Harlequin has wanted to move to work-for-hire agreements for some time, and that the current hard line on pseudonyms is just part of that larger strategy. Harlequin would not comment on this or any other aspect of the pseudonym controversy. "We are not prepared to use *The Nation* as our method of communication to the author community," explained Bernard Stevenson, vice president for administration and legal affairs.

The Authors Guild has yet to decide on what action, if any, it will take in the Harlequin matter. Among the courses of action it could pursue are: complaining to the Federal Trade Commission that Harlequin is indulging in unfair trade practices made possible by its near monopoly in the marketplace; asking the Justice Department's antitrust division to reexamine the 1985 Silhouette merger that created the romance powerhouse in the first place; or mounting a test case by getting an author whose rights are reverting to sue Harlequin. Any of the approaches is likely to produce a protracted and expensive fight, so a peaceful resolution would seem preferable.

Meanwhile, Harlequin is busily preparing a new line of romance mysteries, to be called Silhouette Shadows. The guidelines sheet suggests they might begin: "In an empty house, the air thick with darkness, a woman waits alone. Her heart beats faster as she hears the creaking of the front door, and then a man's voice, soft with menace, calls out . . . "

Work for hire? □

FED UP WITH POLITICS

The Italians Cry '*Basta!*'

FREDERIKA RANDALL

Milan

The nagging incubus that keeps one party boss awake at night is usually of the sort that will promote another one's sweet dreams. But these nights the pooh-bahs of political Rome are finding themselves disagreeably united in insomnia—with more worries than a mere few votes in the upcoming elections and more aggravations in common than not.

That creepy little guy, the Postman, for example. The Postman, *a k a* Piero Chiambretti, is an imp-faced journalist and satirist with diabolical comic skills who began appearing last fall on the state-TV third channel with an interview program that breaks most of the rules of capital press corps good behavior and that has been sending little waves of tachycardia through *la classe politica*, the political establishment.

His modus operandi is simple—moronically simple. Chiambretti sets out across town to deliver a "postcard" to a party secretary, government minister or similarly placed political figure. Spruced up with a goofy, servile grin and an all-purpose gray uniform (read: loyal state employee, probably with safe patronage job), our mail carrier ambushes his victim in his natural habitat and nails him with a torrent of very pertinent "ingenuous" questions. Meanwhile the cameras glide on, catching all the tics and trappings of Power: the frozen smiles and limp attempts at humor, stony silences and murderous "get him" looks directed at evil-eyed henchmen, etc.

If it's true that every country gets the TV it deserves, then this is a deeply divided land. On the one hand, Italian TV is stiff and bureaucratic: home to lethally "fun" variety shows, funereal footage of government V.I.P.s going about their daily rounds, hostesses in spangled knits, nervous reporters who look politically "recommended." This cast of characters all too frequently sets the tone of RAIUNO, state channel one,

Frederika Randall is an American journalist who lives in Milan.

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which is generally considered a Christian Democratic (D.C.) mouthpiece. The fare on RAIDUE, the Socialist (P.S.I.) channel, is usually a little more sophisticated—"hard-hitting" talk shows and the like. (Both these stations have a higher standard of news reporting and general programming than any U.S. network, of course—but that's another story. The commercial networks owned by media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi—he's aligned with the Socialists, by the way—have yet to be tested, as they've only begun to produce news and opinion shows.)

In the past few years, though, a new, more anarchic kind of television has been breaking through: bubbly, vulgar political satire and tough public affairs programs that soar out of that leaden category with subversive style and wit, raking in Super Bowl–sized audiences. *Telefono Giallo*, for example, was an issues program elegantly disguised as a live call-in murder mystery show, organized around various unsolved crimes (assassinations, bombings, plane crashes) in which the Mafia, secret services and other illegal or occult forces seem to be implicated. *Samarcanda*, a rallying point for dissenters and current thorn in the side of the governing cadres, is a biting (also live) political forum that attacks topics like the Mafia and political corruption, leaping from street interviews to background footage to verbal brawls in the studio. These shows have been sponsored by RAITRE (formerly the Communist channel), which has a strong left profile.

Like many other areas of the public sector, the three state TV channels are *lottizzati* (parceled out) among the "areas of influence" that were dominant in the 1980s—the Christian Democrats, the Socialists and the Communists, now reconstituted as the Democratic Party of the Left (P.D.S.). *Lottizzazione* (the spoils system) is blamed for various Italian ills, such as lack of initiative and a tendency to corruption in the public sector.

Yet in one of those bright exceptions the Italian alchemy can produce, RAITRE, functioning in this heavily politicized atmosphere, has compensated for its meager funding by becoming one of the most creative channels in Europe today. Not that anybody's exactly opposed to creativity, but when (ahem!) political potentates of the dimensions of Giulio Andreotti of the D.C. and Bettino Craxi of the P.S.I. are vulnerable to guerrilla interviews and other such pranks on prime-time TV, phones start to ring. Taboos have been broken. *Glasnost* has gotten way out of bounds.

Glasnost is in fact one of those words (along with "regime" and *nomenklatura*) that have been appearing more and more in discussions of the political situation here. (It may partly be due to the novelty of having some new terminology that is not imported from America.) At any rate, Italians, watching Communist regimes die in Eastern Europe, began to think that perhaps they too were living under a "regime." Despite all the shufflings and reshufflings of Cabinet seats, the argument goes, postwar Italy has been continuously governed by the same forces since 1948. We have the same constellation of political parties, with the D.C. as the pivot, responding to the same vested interests and reaping the same licit and illicit advantages from controlling public works, a big national health care system and the largest state industrial sector in the capitalist world (annual investments are around $20 billion). This is our *nomenklatura*. Even some of the faces are eternal: Take Andreotti, who was Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi's secretary back in 1945 and has been a player in just about every government since. Nobody else in the world has been in power as long as that.

The system is completely out of touch with modern Italy, goes another exasperated version of the argument. A public employment and welfare policy grounded in a postwar "poor country" mentality has degenerated into patronage and corruption. Our public works are scandalous boondoggles; half the contracts go to the Mafia. If you don't have the right party card, the right connections or the right amount of bribe you won't get a license for your shop, a promotion in your job or a contract for your business. Honest entrepreneurs who won't pay the cut the Mafia demands are gunned down in broad daylight, and the justice system does nothing. Welfare benefits paid for by honest taxpayers are given out as favors—90 percent of all lifetime disability pensions are paid to people in the *Mezzogiorno* (the South). Just imagine how many are really disabled! Schools are vandalized—why? Because the companies that provide educational equipment get new contracts that way.

Not to mention, adds a bankerly voice, the fact that much of our legislation and government spending, as well as the financial and service sectors, are hopelessly out of step with the rest of the European Community. The public debt is a black hole. "Partitocracy" (Tammanyism writ large) is ruining us. New laws are constantly blocked by entrenched interests. We need institutional reform, good government. Call it *perestroika* if you like.

All this talk about institutional reform, efficiency and lean government is nothing but Thatcherism in disguise, some one else interjects. It is just an excuse to stop helping the poor, to get them to pay so that a ruthless new class of capitalists can emerge. Wrong, says yet another. All citizens, and especially the least privileged, should demand efficient schools and hospitals, an end to waste and corruption in the state sector, a justice system that's speedy and impartial. . . .

And so it goes. People disagree on the precise diagnosis, but there is an odd consensus about the treatment. When people talk about "reforms" today they don't mean gradual changes, they mean they're fed up with the whole system. Goodbye to the First Republic! Down with the regime!

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Now possibly there is a certain rhetorical wishful thinking in this talk of a "regime." Once you've applied the word to the system, the writing seems to be on the wall, the emperor's underwear visible to all. There's also the malicious fun of suggesting that the Christian Democrats (among the most forcibly U.S.-backed anti-Communists in postwar Europe) may share the fate of "really existing socialist" governments that got the historical ax.

But the new vocabulary also identifies a new opposition. Significantly, the message (like the Postman's unwelcome visit) is not addressed to the ruling class, the *classe dirigente* of a bourgeois capitalist state, as it might have been only a few years ago, when that language was commonly used. It is addressed to *la classe politica*, a category that in the eyes of many includes the old Communist opposition, the former P.C.I.

No country claims to love its politicians, but it's sometimes hard to believe the deep contempt with which Italians today will talk about their *classe politica*. What is especially new is the way this throw-the-bums-out mood is spreading, gathering under its cloak a wild array of groups of all political stripes—right-wing populists and left-wing intellectuals, much of the private-sector business and financial elite, state-sector technocrats—and, as national elections loom in April, the allegiance of several parties, especially the Republicans and the P.D.S.

Trying to ride or gain control of this—what to call it? not a movement, certainly not a coalition, this *mood* of anger and resentment—are people like Umberto Bossi, the shrewd Senator of the right-wing Lombard League, one of the earliest antiparty forces to emerge, with a very visible reactionary fringe and a strong electoral base in parts of the North (it recently came in first with 24 percent of the vote in the D.C. stronghold of Brescia). The league has defined Rome, not the South, as the target of criticism, although Bossi plays dangerously on Northern resentment against a *Mezzogiorno* that is overdependent on government assistance. Partitocratic Rome is depicted as a sort of decadent Papal Court, the seat of vice, corruption and indulgences.

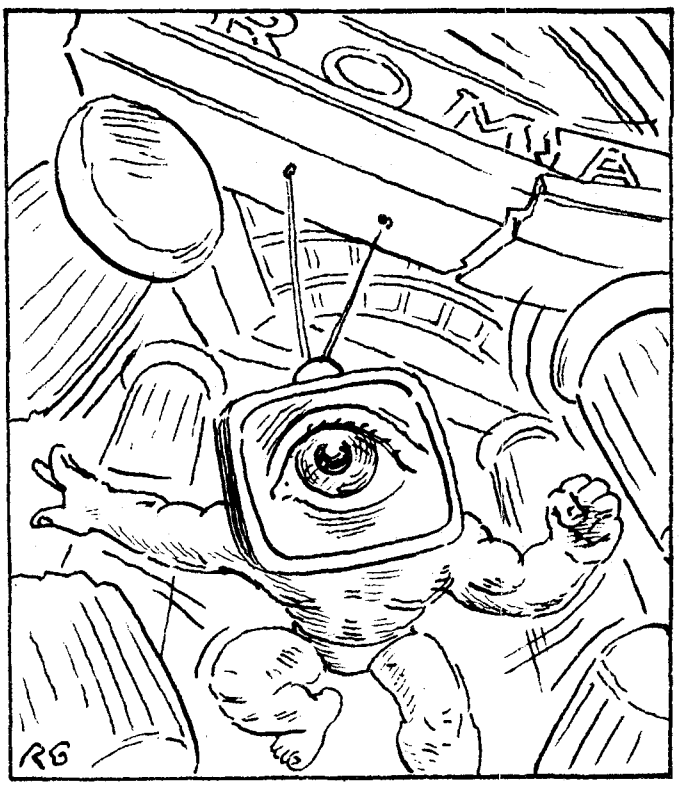
Another who's become a magnet for dissent is Mario Segni, a parliamentary deputy from an establishment D.C. family, who sponsored a winning referendum last summer for changes in voting procedures—changes silently but firmly opposed by his own party. There is also Leoluca Orlando, former D.C. mayor of Palermo, who left the party to start a Jesuit reform current called La Rete (the Network).

The revolt against Rome hasn't yet created any new electoral forces on the left—although many on the left despise the *partitocrazia*. Two progressives who have tried to organize dissent are Eugenio Scalfari, editor of the national newspaper *La Repubblica*, who has been promoting a "lay" reform movement he calls the National League, and sociologist Nando Dalla Chiesa, founder of Società Civile, a nonaligned progressive association that is very influential among the Milanese elite.

As for the traditional left, it is sharply split between those who hold fast to Communist ideals (Rifondazione Comunista) and the much larger *perestroika* forces in Achille Occhetto's P.D.S. Certainly the oft-maligned P.D.S. deserves credit for having been the first to see that the Italian cold war balance of power between left and right was coming apart. The P.D.S. has some of the left's sharpest thinkers on its side and has been surprisingly agile in drawing new protest forces under its progressive wing. There is even a slight chance the party will succeed in its bid to create a strong social democratic movement that could finally break the conservative monopoly on government.

Leagues, associations, networks and newly founded parties: All have to some extent stepped into an opposition vacuum, created by the disappearance of the Communist Party, and into an electoral vacuum as well. When the party collapsed, one might have expected the political establishment to rejoice. Paradoxically, it has made things worse for them, destroying an equilibrium that held for more than forty years—in which up to 40 percent of the vote could be discounted because neither Communists nor neo-Fascists could join the government. Now that there is no reason the P.D.S. cannot be part of a government, the Socialists and the Christian Democrats inevitably have to revise downward their share of power and control. Privileges will have to be given up; votes will no longer be assured.

What the new political order will look like in a few years is not easy to say. But nostalgia was already in full flower as the election campaign got under way in early February. The D.C. and P.S.I.'s first move was a heavy artillery attack . . . on Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti for a letter written in 1943, in which he expressed the view that Fascist prisoners of war in Soviet camps might have to be sacrificed for political reasons. (In one of those double-dip plot turns that left everyone breathless, this document, fished out of the tons of "compromising" material that is now belching forth from former Soviet archives, turned out to be partially forged.) But no matter that Togliatti has been dead since 1964 and



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the Communist Party no longer exists; for if, as in certain districts, the dead can vote, they can probably also be resuscitated to provide a cozier sort of enemy, the kind you love to hate. □

YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP

High Schools for Docile Workers

HANNAH FINAN RODITI

Under the battle cry of "competitiveness," high schools across the nation are being mobilized to turn out graduates with the skills needed to compete with foreign workers. At the heart of this reform wave are "youth apprenticeship" programs. States are racing to pass legislation setting them up in their schools. The concept is strongly backed by the Bush Administration, and it forms a key part of the educational program Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton is touting on the campaign trail. Last October the High Skills, Competitive Workforce Act of 1991, promoting similar objectives at the national level, was introduced in Congress. These innovations will give business a pivotal role in determining what young people should know and be able to do when they graduate, and how they should think about themselves and society.

The "education for work" idea is winning support from conservatives and liberals alike for several reasons. First, it is presented as a way to redress the inequity of an educational system that neglects the three-quarters of young people who don't go on to complete a bachelor's degree. Second, newly popular theories of learning suggest that students learn better "in context"—in real-life situations that require thinking and problem solving. Third, there is widening agreement that this country stands to lose its higher-wage jobs unless its "front line" workers have the level of skill and adaptability of workers in industrial nations like Germany and Japan.

Typically, youth apprentices would make a three-to-four-year commitment to a trade and an employer spanning the last year or two of high school and the following two years. Their hours on the job might rise from twenty per week in year one to full time in year four, and they would be paid. Teachers and employers would teach reading, math and other courses using workplace applications. One or more technical courses would be tailored to a specific trade. Students would graduate with a high school diploma, significant work experience, credits toward an associate degree and some kind of certificate of trade mastery.

Inspired by Germany's "dual system," which places more than 60 percent of 16-year-olds in workplaces to learn a trade, youth apprenticeship is being pushed by the Labor Department and is all the rage in more than a dozen states. Arkansas, California, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin have demonstration apprenticeship programs in the works. Last summer Oregon passed the most comprehensive legislation yet, a bill that "will fundamentally restructure the primary and secondary educational systems in Oregon," according to its sponsor, State Representative Vera Katz. Students will complete a Certificate of Initial Mastery in basic skills such as reading and math, and then at age 16 pursue either a traditional college prep track or a "technical and professional" track, which is expected to include substantial time on the job in the form of youth apprenticeships.

To insure that this "work-based learning" track meets the needs of business and produces adequately trained graduates, performance standards are being developed. This process was kicked off with the publication of "What Work Requires of Schools" by the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. Released under the aegis of President Bush's "America 2000" education reform agenda, the report specifies what high school graduates should know and be able to do to meet business needs; for example, to work in teams, monitor and correct system performance, allocate time and money, reason and solve problems.

Seventeen states and six urban school districts have joined the National Center on Education and the Economy's New Standards Project to help produce the kind of employees business says it needs. With close links to the Administration, the N.C.E.E. is spearheading the next step, working with executives in the retail industry to draw up guidelines on what graduates should know and be able to do at age 20, and therefore what the curriculum should be teaching them at age 16.

The idea of making young people's first work experience more meaningful, their schoolwork more relevant and their transition to life after high school more fruitful is sensible. And who could argue with a system touted as leading toward a higher-skill, higher-wage economy? The problem is that although well intentioned, the current education-for-work proposals fare well on none of these counts.

Consider the "competitiveness" issue. "America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!" a report released in 1990 by the N.C.E.E.'s Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, finds that only an estimated 5 percent of employers organize work so as to require a high level of skill among workers. The authors contend that this country's declining productivity is more the result of how employers organize work than of a shortage of skilled workers. Although in surveys employers initially report such a shortage, when pressed for specifics the great majority consistently cite the need for a low-skilled work force that would tolerate an ethic of obedience and a hierarchical organization.

An even stronger critique of the "labor shortage" or "skills mismatch" view of market trends promulgated by the Labor Department is reached by the authors of the Economic Policy Institute's recent report "The Myth of the Coming Labor Shortage." They advocate European-style incentives for businesses to adopt production methods that require high skills among workers. Among their proposals: a 1 percent payroll

Hannah Finan Roditi has provided consulting assistance to states and schools on youth apprenticeship and is now a union organizer.

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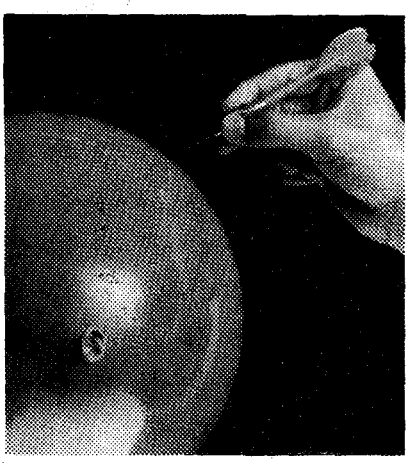

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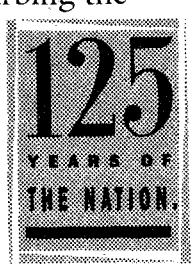

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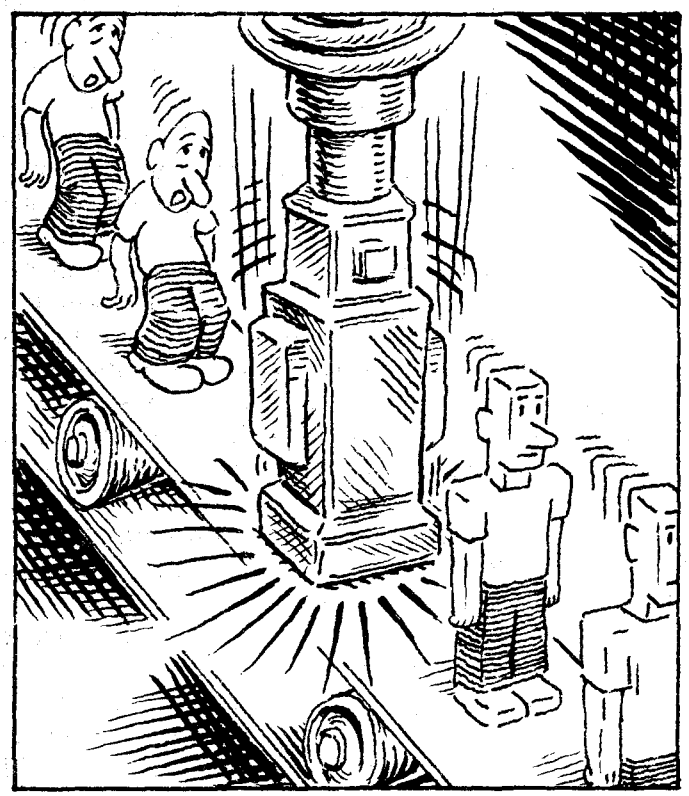
tax that would finance training programs in the absence of employer training, and the formation of councils giving workers a say in how work is organized. In short, youth apprenticeship programs won't address America's "competitiveness" problems as long as so few jobs are available for skilled workers.

Does youth apprenticeship fare better on its learning goals? This question cannot be answered conclusively yet, since existing youth apprenticeship programs are still in the formative stages. But my impression, after visits to longstanding, well-recognized work-education programs and to the new breed of youth apprenticeship programs, was that students in them learn few academic or technical skills and almost nothing at all about independent thinking.

In the much-touted St. Louis work-study programs, seniors José and Deb describe their jobs. They say they spend the entire time photocopying and sitting alone. Few of the students in the program gain any idea of career tracks or how to advance in their assigned workplaces. In one of the few classes they attend, the teacher hammers away at the theme that capitalism and the free enterprise system equate with freedom and choice. The "math" (which is actually an accounting course) teacher told me that the business-dominated curriculum committee recently watered down the math curriculum on the ground that students didn't really need such skills on the job.

In the well-publicized Bank of America school-to-work program with a poor, predominantly black San Francisco high school, a student interviewed at his work station sheepishly tells me that his grades have declined because he doesn't have time now to do homework—not surprising since he rushes from school to work, where he stays until 8 o'clock each night. He has spent a year pressing a button that takes photos of checks—and this is the student program administrators are proud to display. Arno Kracht, speaking for the bank, insists that other students have more rewarding jobs but, he adds, "the bank had a need for hourly employees for short-term jobs. . . . They may learn that this is not what they want to do for the rest of their lives." While touring the shop of a prospective employer for another youth apprenticeship program, we noticed that some of the work stations sported pinups. The chief curriculum developer and teacher-trainer said female students would "just have to learn to accept that stuff." He feared the employer would not participate if the school complained.



In order for work-education proposals to move beyond helping students fit into the corporate mold, they will need to find systematic ways of getting students to think critically about the workplace. This is the purpose of the pioneering high school curriculum *The Power in Our Hands* and the excellent new book *Learning Work: A Critical Pedagogy of Work Education*, edited by Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux. The "reflective learning" the authors describe in the latter, mandated in Ontario as part of all work-education programs, "enables us to recognize and clarify how the organization of work in society is neither natural or inevitable. This then allows us to emphasize teaching that helps students imagine, consider, and judge a variety of possibilities for how work may be accomplished." Concretely this means, for example, getting students to explore what "fair pay" is and to evaluate the health and safety conditions at their work site. Reflective learning would examine other workplace and social issues, including individual and collective ways of resolving conflict; ethics, power and control in the workplace; alternative ownership systems; labor rights and history; and environmental and community issues and their relationship to business.

Because incentives for business participation are so weak in this country, however, the schools have almost no power in their relationship with participating companies. The result is that business exercises veto power over anything remotely threatening in the classroom. Some small machine-shop owners, for example, don't want young workers learning about job costing because they fear that workers would then be able to determine the profit on a job. Employers can simply walk away from the schools, but more insidiously, teachers and school administrators begin to censor themselves as they increasingly focus on wooing business partners.

For example, a leading academic who is developing a new set of national student-performance standards admits that though he would like to include more assessment questions on unionism and other workplace issues, he doesn't see how to do that and retain the business support he has so assiduously nurtured. A pilot version of these standards will be tested in Illinois, a state with a deep-rooted history of labor struggle and union consciousness. In another such state, youth apprenticeship program developers say they avoid including anything on unions in the curriculum in order not to scare away machine-shop owners. The only mediating force is the Perkins Act, which mandates that students be taught "all aspects" of their trade, but states are implementing this language unevenly, at best.

Neither state nor proposed national legislation on youth apprenticeship encourages critical reflection. Nor are teachers

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being trained to be able to develop this skill; rather, they are being instructed in how to identify skills that businesses need. In short, most apprenticeship programs are aimed at producing docile workers—problem solvers, but within employer-set limits—rather than citizens of a democracy capable of independent thought.

Apprenticeship programs could also reinforce class distinctions. In a carefully researched recent study of the Australian and British youth training systems and the lessons they hold for the United States, education consultant Margaret Vickers warns against following in the footsteps of Britain's mediocre employer-driven system. "In the U.S. system, where the most prestigious forms of education and training are clearly [controlled by schools], the parallel creation of an employer-controlled . . . training scheme would inevitably trap the scheme's clients into low-skill, low-status options. . . . The surest way to help young people advance along respected pathways is to ensure that the training they receive is controlled and delivered primarily by schools and colleges, rather than by the employment sector."

Most work-education proposals and experiments discourage independence and creativity.

Even in the case of enlightened school and business partners, 16-year-olds who enroll in youth apprenticeship programs are ill served. Current demonstration programs and proposals isolate these students almost completely from other students. And although many students don't participate in sports and other extracurricular activities, enrolling in these programs eliminates that option for those who want it. In focus-group discussions, parents and students consistently express their fears of exactly these results. In a Mississippi Delta focus group I conducted, African-American parents were particularly concerned that youth apprenticeship could limit their children's access to a bachelor's degree.

Their concerns have merit. In their most ambitious conception, youth apprenticeship programs would lead to an associate's degree. Since most associate's credits are not transferable to Bachelor of Arts programs, and since work experience for credit is frowned on by B.A. programs, a youth apprenticeship graduate would have difficulty getting a B.A. Moreover, despite assurances that the work-based learning track isn't second class to college prep and won't restrict students' options, program designers are finding that occupationally specific courses crowd out, for example, foreign languages. And because of the pressure to produce a student skilled in a particular occupational area, the exploration of a variety of occupations is discouraged.

Perhaps most important is the danger that a learning environment geared almost completely and uncritically to success at work starting at age 16 could act as an intellectual straitjacket. The experience of Germany is relevant here. A high-level German education official told me, "Many of our youth apprentices participate in the union where they work. They elect their own representative. This gives them a different view of the workplace. And we have community sports and photography clubs, unlike in the United States, where everything revolves around the school." The development of community-based sports and youth activity centers is one of the reforms needed before school-to-work education can contribute adequately to young people's learning and preparation for life.

Students should rotate through a variety of work experiences while in high school, rather than being pressured or encouraged to make an uninformed several-year commitment to one occupational area. They should be exposed to nonprofits, community service and small businesses. And they should interact with a broad group of fellow students rather than only with those who have chosen a similar occupational area. Leadership development must be a driving principle of classes and program operations.

There are programs that strike a balance between a nontraditional school environment and work, and that provide excellent models for developing the range of citizenship skills and work experience that young people need. YouthBuild, for example, engages city students in building low-income housing while they learn academic skills. Students learn project management, meeting facilitation, conflict resolution, peer support and other leadership skills. They also elect representatives to the program decision-making board and help hire staff.

The Center for Law and Education and REAL Enterprises both illustrate the possibilities of moving beyond the corporate sector. They have helped schools pioneer approaches in Chicago and in the rural South in which students carry out community-needs assessments and then start up and run small businesses or work with existing community groups.

At Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College in New York City, students in grades nine, ten and twelve spend thirteen weeks a year at a job. During this stint they return to class one day a week for discussion of labor and union issues, business links to the community, worker skills and attitudes, etc. Learning is enriched as students compare and reflect on their experiences in different workplaces. Two programs at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, systematically encourage students to think through and write about a range of workplace issues. One of these introduces mostly disadvantaged students to teaching, in the process requiring them to re-evaluate radically their own school experience.

These examples are lonely exceptions. Most work-education proposals and experiments discourage independence and creativity in the country's younger generation. Yet most current schooling isn't much better. Parents, educators, labor unions and others should push national, state and local policy-makers toward the kind of teaching and school/work activities that will give young people some solid work experience without suppressing independent thought. □

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READING AROUND.

ELIZABETH POCHODA

Browbeating

Forget for a moment that **The New Republic**'s arts coverage is usually wrapped in mossbacked loathing for anything déclassé, and read Tad Friend's cover story in defense of the middlebrow (March 2). In what amounts to a spirited rejoinder to Dwight Macdonald's famously chilling essay of 1960, "Masscult and Midcult," Friend argues that middlebrow books, movies and music offer some unity in a fragmented culture—that by being accessible they let us all in on what everybody is talking about, that they frequently speak in passionate terms about our "common humanity" and that for such reasons they are despised by highbrows, who fetishize difficulty in art as a means of asserting superiority over the less learned. Friend certainly knows his way around the signs and signifiers of low-, middle- and highbrow art. He also understands the defenses of irony and slumming by which highbrows let *lumpen* products into their lives while keeping them in quotation marks (e.g., going to a Steven Seagal movie and betting on the body count). Few will miss his point about the value of direct and accessible art in changing the minds and hearts of a society (**TNR** editors take note). Even fewer will fail to recognize that cultural nose-thumbing is also common in the writings of feminists and leftists who speak about things that concern everyone in language interesting and available to few but themselves.

Thelma & Louise, Us & Them

For an example of exactly what Friend is talking about turn to the current **Cineaste**, left-leaning magazine of movies and politics, and read the symposium on the sins of *Thelma & Louise*, that classic of middlebrow feminism. Not feminist enough, apparently, or too palatable to the masses to be feminist in the right way, according to these commentators. Other, higher-brow, versions of the women-who-kill story are recommended to viewers instead: Alain Tanner's *Messidor*, in which two women murder a rapist and then satisfy the critics' unpalatability quotient by becoming lovers; or Marlene Gorris's *A Question of Silence*, in which three harassed females kill their tormentor and beat the rap. I can vouch for the smart, slow and turgid qualities of this last product, and also for its lengthy failure to do what good middlebrow art like *T & L* does best—allow us to think and feel at the same time.

Advancing Anita

Writing in the January/February **Columbia Journalism Review**, William Boot (pen name for Christopher Hanson) complains about press coverage before and during the confirmation hearings on Clarence Thomas. Pointing out that many reporters knew about Anita Hill's allegations in July but failed to follow up on them, Boot goes on to observe that feature stories about Thomas's humble origins in Pin Point, Georgia, outnumbered news stories about his decisions on the bench, potential conflicts of interest, fascination with pornography and so forth by a huge margin. Nor, until now, has much attention been devoted to the story of why Angela Wright's testimony about Thomas's sexual advances was never heard. As if in response to Boot, **Ms.**, **Spy** and **The American Spectator** have all taken up the case. The **Spectator** makes imaginative use of hearsay (three male students are reported to have said that Professor Hill returned their papers with pubic hairs attached), non sequitur (Hill's friend Judge Susan Hoerchner may have received a call from her about sexual harassment before Hill went to work for Thomas, as if that invalidates later charges against him) and omission (Hill's performance on the lie detector test is never mentioned). Balance that with a reading of Lynda Edwards's **Spy** article on how Joe Biden kept Angela Wright from testifying against Thomas and how the press obliged by serving up Wright as the harebrained, homophobic she-devil the Republicans said she was, and you have to wonder about this profession. Next, **Ms.** has come up with a seven-part package in the aftermath of Hill/Thomas that includes a not-very-interesting article on harassment by Hill herself, a brilliant but tricky piece on the perversions of language and logic in the hearings by Patricia Williams and commentary by four other African-American feminists, including Eleanor Holmes Norton.

The Groves of Academe

Now that we're looking into high culture and low, I should mention **Lingua Franca**, the frequently lively bimonthly on academic issues and life. In December the review featured a piece on those huge high-rise dormitories that dot campuses across the country, which shows that the pathological behavior associated with inner-city high-rises (rape, vandalism, theft and other forms of mayhem) is not exactly unknown in university settings of the same type.

The Japan Thing

Since Michael Crichton's novel *Rising Sun* has soared to the top of the best-seller lists by endorsing every kind of anti-Japanese prejudice known to Americans, it's worth consulting George Trow's "Keiretsu" in the January 27 issue of **The New Yorker** for a wonderfully funny essay on the differences between Japanese businessmen and monopoly capitalists of the old-fashioned American stripe.

Not Guilty

Kurt Hollander, editor of **The Portable Lower East Side**, has written in to suggest that I am partly responsible for the firing of N.E.A. chief John Frohnmayer. Why? Because I "equated" **PLES**'s "Live Sex Acts" issue with porn, mentioned that it had received N.E.A. funding and thus brought it to the attention of Donald Wildmon and his American Family Association, who are not apparently regular readers of **PLES** but took the trouble to send excerpts to members of Congress. What I actually said [November 18, 1991] was that "Live Sex Acts" was pointless though not objectionable, and that people who try to suppress such stuff only encourage the foolish. Pat Buchanan and Wildmon, on their respective campaign trails, think the lurid should be banished; Hollander and friends think it above criticism. I'm not sure there's much to choose between them.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Memoir With a Mission

VIVIAN GORNICK

THE EDUCATION OF A RELUCTANT RADICAL: Roman Childhood. *By Carl Marzani. Topical Books (260 W. 21st Street, New York, NY 10011). 194 pp. $22.95. Paper $12.95.*

When Gerhard Eisler was dying, Carl Marzani was in Germany and went to visit him. Marzani leaned over the bed and said, "Tell me, Gerhard, what have you learned?" Eisler looked up. He was old and exhausted, his voice nearly a whisper. "I have learned," he said, "how hard it is to build socialism." Today, Marzani himself is 80 years old. I think I'm safe in saying that he still hears Eisler's voice in his ear, urging him on to "patience and irony"—the long view.

I met Carl Marzani eighteen years ago when I was researching a book on American reds. At the age of 62 he talked longer, harder, faster than anyone I'd ever met. As he talked he smoked, drank, cut the air with his hands, leaped up from his chair, paced the floor, grasped the arm of his listener. His dark eyes grew darker, his brows came together in (mock) ferocity, his white spade beard made him look now a patriarch, now an intellectual, now a con man. He was the most integrated Communist I had met. Everything he had learned in a long eventful life—about himself, others, the nature of human experience—seemed to flow into his politics. He had paid attention to the evidence of his senses. That evidence, apparently, had influenced his response—as a Marxist—to the world around him. His politics in turn had undoubtedly shaped the character of his emotional life, tempered his daily judgments, widened the scope of his relationships, made all things human interesting to him. For Marzani, Marxism was a philosophic perspective, not a political doctrine.

Carl Marzani was born in 1912 in Rome, the son of a civil servant and a mother whose urban working-class family could trace itself back twenty-seven generations. He grew up a beloved son, in a happy prospering family, with a bold sense of native right in one of the great cities of the world. In 1923 his father, a socialist, determined to leave Italy because of the rise of Fascism. The family immigrated to the United States near relatives in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Overnight, Carl became the son of an immigrant pressing pants in a coal-mining town on the other side of the ocean. He grew up fighting kids who called him "wop" and comforting himself with books. An intelligent high school teacher saved him, got him a scholarship, and in 1935 he graduated from Williams College with another scholarship—this time to study at Oxford.

Marzani says his work is too left for the right, too right for the left. But 'somebody's gotta say it.'

On his way to England in 1936, he stopped off in Spain just to see what the civil war was all about. He stayed to fight with the anarchists. By the time he got to Oxford, a year later, he was a radical. Spain, he has always said, made him see the shape of the century, the meaning of class struggle, and also that he was to be compelled by that shape, that meaning, for the rest of his life. He never wanted to become a radical, he says. He had another life in mind—at Williams he had determined on literature and writing—but after Spain there seemed no choice.

He came back to the United States in 1939, joined the American Communist Party and quickly became a section organizer on New York's Lower East Side. In 1941 he quit the C.P. in order to run a Popular Front agency for the party, but he knew he was never going back; the authoritarianism of the C.P., as well as the narrowness of its doctrinaire politics, had felt oppressive to him; he would not again put himself under its control. However, he did not make public his departure from the party—not even during the bitter years ahead that included indictment, prison and financial hardship—and to this day the question of Marzani's membership is a matter for speculation in some quarters.

When the war broke out Marzani went to Washington to offer himself up for government service; he was accepted into the Office of Strategic Services under William Donovan. In 1947 he was indicted on the charge of having defrauded the government in the matter of his Communist Party membership. The case went to the Supreme Court, and Marzani became a cause célèbre. A favorable decision was lost by one vote, and he spent nearly three years in prison. He was released at a time of full-scale American anti-Communism, and entered upon his real life's work: an almost obsessional absorption with America's part in the cold war.

In the years since then Marzani rebuilt three houses in lower Manhattan, worked for a labor union, ran a left-wing publishing house and wrote wrote wrote: books, pamphlets, articles. Only a fraction of what he has written has been published. He says his work is too left for the right, too right for the left. Why does he keep writing? "Because," he says with an impassioned lack of modesty, "what I'm saying is important. Somebody's gotta say it, and eventually it's got to be heard. To throw out Marx with totalitarianism is to spit on the future, dig our own graves and fall right in."

Nothing that has happened in the past two and a half years—not the fall of Eastern Europe, not the dissolution of the Soviet Union—has persuaded him otherwise. He remains committed: The world must go left. Eighteen years ago he said, "Marxism is a way of feeling, a way of responding, a way of seeing the deeper meaning of this fucking profit system, and ultimately it's all of a piece." Today he would say, "Stalinism has died, not socialism. Whenever a liberal or a conservative in this country refuses to take part in some shitty capitalist thing I count it one for the socialist side."

He wanted to write a memoir that would make real to the disinterested reader what it has felt like to be inside his skin—compelled by the events of his time, against the pull of so many other internal influences, toward radicalism. He didn't think an intellectual autobiography would do it. In casting about for a solution to the problem he hit upon a somewhat novel, certainly ambitious, plan to write five or six small books under the

Vivian Gornick is the author of The Romance of American Communism *(Basic).*

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rubric *The Education of a Reluctant Radical*, each book concentrating on a section of years he would remember as fully as he could. *Roman Childhood* is the first book in the enterprise; the second is already written and will soon be published.

In this book we have the young Carl in Rome between 1912 and 1924. The life that is described is casually, inescapably Catholic. The child is continually exposed—at school, at church, at family gatherings and through family histories—to an extraordinary richness of religious art and ritual. Rome itself—with its endless fountains, squares and public monuments—forms a backdrop that makes this evocation of Italian Catholicism early in this century almost tactile. Marzani recalls it all with a concreteness of detail that is quite wonderful. Because he remembers with a pleasure that is so real and so alive, we see the father's socialism, slowly but surely, weaning the young Carl away from the all-in-allness of family Catholicism. Why? It's very simple. Socialism makes Carl think, Catholicism doesn't, and he wants to think. *Roman Childhood* is the story of a life lucky enough to come to consciousness through the power of modern politics in struggle with religious culture.

Throughout the book there is continual reference to the years ahead. With each incident related we see the man Marzani is to become: the sensualist, the intellectual, the highly spirited nature. It is easy to understand what he means when he says it could so easily have all gone otherwise.

The Education of a Reluctant Radical is a memoir with a mission. At a time when socialists all over the world awaken each day into a welter of pain, confusion and regret, Carl Marzani is sitting down to remind us that socialism remains a powerful response to organized human need, and that the original idea was to build it from the inside out. □

Dystopia Down Under

BILL MARX

THE TAX INSPECTOR. *By Peter Carey. Knopf. 279 pp. $21.*

Australian novelist Peter Carey hears a rumble Down Under, but it's not kangaroo herds bounding across the Outback. It's the clang of extinction, the thump of doomsday. A comic absurdist brooding on the guilt of a society founded on prison labor, Carey proffers a hyperbolic vision springing from a social conscience betrayed—with man, not God, as the culprit. The punch line of the apocalypse, in these Revelations, is that nobody has died but it's Hell on earth anyway.

Since the mid-1970s, Carey has been Australia's Chicken Little, though his squawks of alarm have been greeted with clucks of approval both in and outside his homeland. Enmeshed in his country's history but not insulated by it, Carey has plugged his homeland's racial myths, economic skulduggery and collective search for identity into the sophisticated machinery of international prose. His rambunctious nihilism not only undercuts Australian fiction's traditional emphasis on the dialectics of ethnic and class conflict; it serves as a surrealistic riposte to the numinous sagas of Nobel Prize–winning countryman Patrick White, whose pioneering volumes in the 1940s challenged what had been a hidebound tradition of Aussie realism. Disdainful of a philistine and mercantile society, White explored the quest of a select few for a Blakean vision, replacing the outdoor adventures of earlier Australian novels with rhapsodic inner landscapes. Deeply influenced by the political idealism and artistic iconoclasm of the 1960s, Carey flips White's perception of Heaven into black comedy.

Populated by mystical fools who try to turn their delusions into reality, Carey's anti-Utopias skewer the concept of romantic epiphany and its implied escape from history. No matter what form Carey's jeremiad takes—the macabre sci-fi of his collection of short stories, *Exotic Pleasures*; the quirky modernism of historical novels such as *Illywhacker* and *Oscar and Lucinda*; or the theological hysteria of his latest tome, *The Tax Inspector*—the 48-year-old author is obsessed with the end of days, with social retribution in devilish forms. His feverish tales are rooted in a panoramic vision of his country's transformation from vicious penal colony to Darwinian capitalist state—the shame, conscious and unconscious, of possessors begging to be dispossessed runs through his books. Yet this didacticism is clothed in stylistic and intellectual sleights of hand that owe much to the linguistic legerdemain of writers such as García Márquez, Robbe-Grillet and Nabokov. Carey's imaginings take the form of corrosive cultural fables, parables of disenchantment in which dreams of transcendence burst like pustules.

The combination of a "wombats come home to roost" message and a somewhat experimental prose package has made Carey a dependable hit for those genially rebelling against the stodgy world of English letters. *Oscar and Lucinda*, a candied Conradian tale about a nineteenth-century religious fanatic who builds a church made of glass, won the Booker Prize in 1988; *Illywhacker*, a 600-page reminiscence of a 139-year-old con man and entrepreneur (and Carey's finest achievement to date), had been nominated three years before for the same award. Both books spotlight the destructive/creative lure of self-transformation; each is an epic narrative alternating paragraphs of unabashed lyricism with chunks of undigested research and muzzy notions about cultural and spiritual decay.

Refusing to languish in the shadow of the proper English novel, Carey has bolted together his own classy jalopies: the chassis of Aussie fiction outfitted with some newfangled chrome imported from America via the black humorists of the late 1950s and 1960s. *Illywhacker* smacks of Thomas Berger's *Little Big Man*, while *Oscar and Lucinda* recalls John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor*. Laced with random violence and rampant parody, Carey's antic worlds recall the Pop Art landscapes of Kurt Vonnegut and Thomas Pynchon in their clownish instability, their subservience to a cruel destiny. Beneath Carey's hallucinogenic prose lurks the menacing sight of a satirist on the edge—a metaphysical joker who treats the characters of his hermetic sphere like galley slaves.

Unfortunately, *The Tax Inspector*, like some of its models, draws Armageddon only in cartoonish strokes. The novel is set in the present, and its dysfunctional family, the Catchprices, come across as sicko descendants of Faulkner's Snopeses and the Addams Family. The loopy matriarch of the tribe, 86-year-old Granny Catchprice, had wanted a flower garden but she married glad-hander Cacka and they started a chicken farm instead, and then a G.M. car dealership in a suburb of Sydney. Now Cacka's kicked off and the

Bill Marx is a book and theater critic living in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is writing a book on the state of contemporary criticism in the arts.

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business has gone to pot, a victim of the yuppie revolution and of Granny's no-good children, who include Cathy, a ditzy country singer (her songs include "You Drove a Freeway Through My Heart" and "Drunk as a Lord") who dreams of Nashville stardom, and Mort, a glum, guilt-ridden loner who has a yearning for adolescent male flesh, particularly his own son's. Granny's remaining child, Jack, has fled the lot to become a real estate mogul whose spiritual corruption takes the more mundane form of influence with politicos and gangsters.

This time around, Carey's addled cosmic avenger is Mort's 16-year-old son, Benny. After he's fired from the parts department, the guy shaves all the hair off his body ("His chest, his legs, his penis all had that shiny slippery look of a child just out of the bath"), embraces the laughable delusions of power and success hawked by his "Actualizing, Visualizing" tapes and christens himself an angel. Yet this self-proclaimed *Übermensch* lives in the car dealership's soggy basement—a cavern filled with graffiti, snakes preserved in formaldehyde and sexual contraptions worthy of de Sade's playroom. Vish, Benny's ineffectual brother, has joined the Hare Krishnas to get away from the clan, but gets called back to the manse by Granny, who has forgotten she's ratted on Cathy and Mort to the tax inspector of the title, Maria Takis. Eight months pregnant, the penny counter kicks off the predictable riot of harebrained reformation and mayhem. By the end of the book, Cathy is taking off, Mort is blabbing about how Cacka groped his kids, Vish is bleeding from a gunshot wound, Benny is slugging it out in the basement with Maria (who's giving birth) and Granny is planting sticks of dynamite around Catchprice Motors.

Carey commented in a recent interview that "the soil Benny is growing out of—nothing very beautiful or wonderful is going to come out of it." Thus *The Tax Inspector*'s conclusion via explosion doesn't come as much of a surprise. It's not that the author has lost his flair for unexpected but telling simile: "They lay all day, cocooned in their beds in their rooms, like grubs locked out of metamorphosis." And his powers of mordant description remain fresh: "Broken earth was like any fresh killed thing—a rabbit, a fish—alive with colour. When you fractured it, the smell poured out, like from a peeled orange. . . ." But for all of its wacked-out verve, the novel becomes somewhat tiresome as it rattles along,

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A People's Charter

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—MICHAEL STERN, on the front page of the San Francisco Chronicle Book Review

"A magisterial work, high-minded and erudite...The authors will not relent in their prodding of the American conscience...What more appropriate way to celebrate [the] bicentennial."
—JONATHAN KIRSCH, Los Angeles Times

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partly because it begins to read like an apocalypse on cruise control.

The godfather of modern cataclysm, Dostoyevsky, made his demonic characters attractive by recognizing their paradoxical natures—good and evil are fused in perpetual conflict. Carey's figures are weirder by far, but they lack any concomitant sense of redemption. Benny's archangel of death isn't a perverted twist on goodness but rather springs from the book's smug chokehold on its social misfits. Striving for a funky Dostoyevskian nightmare, Carey ends up with an overwrought daydream.

Like any number of post-everything novelists, Carey loves to play the Almighty—self-consciously setting metaphysical land mines for his psycho puppets and then blaming his characters for their missteps (Granny "had made her life, invented it"). The brilliant frivolity of Carey's prose barely disguises what seems to be an utter disregard for the emotional and intellectual scope of his art. *The Tax Inspector*'s satiric targets—Hare Krishna, yuppie culture, self-help therapy—have been worn to nubs. And Carey's admiration for Maria's tax investigations as a form of social justice reinforces the suspicion that the writer is carrying out a chic version of the liberal revenge fantasy—the frustrated lefty as a happy, not grim, reaper. Further evidence of his closet crusading is provided by Carey's dotty screenplay for the recently released film *Until the End of the World* (co-written with director Wim Wenders), which deals with the possibility of global destruction in the year 1999. The ultimately pious exercise ends with its heroine escaping from a crippling obsession with her nightmares, investigating ocean polluters as an orbiting member of "Greenspace." It's hard to tell whether Carey, in the getup of omniscient stylist, wants to remake all Creation or just do a patch job.

The question of whether Carey's prose is clever enough to compensate for an undercurrent of cant becomes moot in *The Tax Inspector*. There's a strange irony in watching the novelist lurch into the ambush he's set for his characters: Relentlessly mixing religious symbols and insect imagery, the writer, along with the reader, is ensnared in the overheated metaphors that do in the Catchprice family. The final pages seethe with so many iridescent creepy-crawlies that one is tempted to reach for the insect repellent. Concerned that we just won't get his point about a world gone mad, Carey moves beyond allegorical overdrive into buggy monomania. The tattoo on Benny's back, which first looks like a serpent, then begins to resemble half an angel's wing, finally shows itself to be "red, blue, green, luminous, trembling, like a dragon fly, like something smashed against the windscreen of a speeding car." As God's designated driver, Carey would like to think he's behind the wheel. But *The Tax Inspector* isn't a big smash. It's a big squish. □

The Romantic Publisher

LINDSAY WATERS

KURT WOLFF: A Portrait in Essays and Letters. *Edited by Michael Ermarth. Translated by Deborah Lucas Schneider. Chicago. 223 pp. $24.95.*

With envy I have watched those who are not publishers review this book. I have not envied their detachment; they have not been able to be detached, any more than I can be, in writing of the confessions of this admirable, even great, publisher of Franz Kafka, Karl Kraus, Boris Pasternak, Günter Grass, Rabindranath Tagore and Anne Morrow Lindbergh. My envy of the other reviewers is basic: They can attempt to judge this book and judge this career (it amounts to the same thing, given the nature of the book) without being judged themselves. A publisher cannot write about or even read Kurt Wolff's confessions without fessing up, at least to him- or herself, and without facing up to the fact that he or she is not worthy of touching the hem of this publisher. Hyperbole? Or am I suggesting the profession is so bad and Wolff so good that there is no one like him today? There are, in fact, many more people like him today than the world knows about or will ever know about. But this book reveals clearly the truth of the legends we have heard about Wolff's professional conduct. He was extraordinary. The portrait that emerges from this book is the True Mirror for Publishers.

Any publisher would like to measure up on the scale of achievements Wolff's work established, but publishing is not a matter—as Wolff believed and shows in eloquent detail here—of counting and measuring. Wolff was no dreamer. He writes, "As a *publisher* it is my desire not to wax enthusiastic, but to sell books." And he did, sometimes in the hundreds of thousands and millions. He was a gutsy entrepreneur willing to put his money where his taste was. But taste is what matters. Winning writers over to the publishing house, helping them fulfill their own vocation, winning readers over to writers—for all these the scorecard provided in Accounting 101 is a means, not an end, to understanding what is happening. The first words in the publishing gospel according to Kurt Wolff are a variation on the first words of the Gospel according to John: "In the beginning was the word, not the number."

Most people, if they know of publishers at all, know of Maxwell Perkins, the editor whose taste guided Scribner's in the first half of this century, and no one else. Perkins was the exception that proves the rule harshly stated by French author Louis-Ferdinand Céline: "All publishers are bastards." These days publishers organize themselves in conglomerates with names as enticing as—to cite a few from our cousins across the Pond—Octopus Publishing Group and Random Century. Octopus Publishing—its tentacles mean to entangle you! Random Century? Publishers of a whole damned *siècle* of Dadaists, from Hugo Ball in Zurich to the Situationist International and their offspring today. Or perhaps we are to take "random" in a different sense: RC Publishing would be the publishers for any century and for all centuries and not just the twentieth. Publishers that name themselves like that cannot object too strenuously to the words Céline hurled at us.

Where and how did this paragon, Kurt Wolff, emerge and what does his virtue consist of? You will best understand the where and the how, have much pleasure in the process and learn much about the life of letters in this century if you read the book—speeches, letters and memoirs of authors—in its entirety. The what I had best say a few words about lest you doubt that the various Camelots Kurt Wolff established in Europe ever existed, much less continue to exist in the States at the Helen and Kurt Wolff imprint of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, just celebrating its thirtieth anniversary this year.

What the book leaves sketchy is a sense

Lindsay Waters is executive editor of Harvard University Press.

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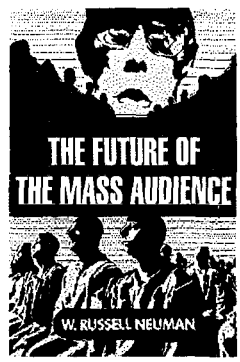
of the broader cultural context from which Wolff emerged. He belonged to what historians call the Generation of 1914, men and women who lived their 20s in the teens of this century, the years of World War I. Kurt Wolff spent two years fighting at the front, one in Belgium and the other in Macedonia. This was also the generation that gave rise in the German-speaking world to the art movement called Expressionism. Wolff would always resist attaching any label, let alone that one, to what he did, but he succeeded in becoming (along with his friend Ernst Rowohlt) the leading publisher of his generation and earned thereby his place in the great line of publishers that I will, for lack of a better term, call the romantic movement in publishing. This tradition runs from Goethe's publisher, Cotta, through the generation before Wolff that featured Thomas Mann's publisher, Samuel Fischer; Rilke's publisher, Anton Kippenberg, the founder of Insel Verlag and Wolff's inspiration; on through Peter Suhrkamp and Siegfried Unseld in the post-World War II era, publishers of Brecht, Celan, Handke and Adorno. Until 1933-45 such publishers were likely to be located in Leipzig. Their aim was grand—to define a cultural moment. That moment for Wolff included World War I, but the war caused no revolution in Wolff's career. In 1908, at the age of 21, he had already started collecting authors for a publishing house. It became an obsession, an addiction.

The astonishing thing—one among the many that make him different from us—is that Wolff was able to start his publishing house without much capital. He had some money he had inherited when his mother died, and his first wife had some money. Later, in New York City during World War II, when he and Helen Wolff and Jacques Schiffrin started Pantheon Books, very little capital ($16,000) was required, but then they could take T.S. Eliot out for lunch at the Grand Ticino for 75 cents. Today it is basically impossible to start a trade publishing house without an "angel," and when the angel passes away—the example of North Point is painfully near at hand—the firm collapses too. Or the angel might get bored with publishing—same sad end. And it is nearly impossible to maintain a trade house without other interests in textbooks, magazines or theme parks. The return of low interest rates, if it continues, may cause things to change, but they have not yet. In this respect—the



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W. Russell Neuman

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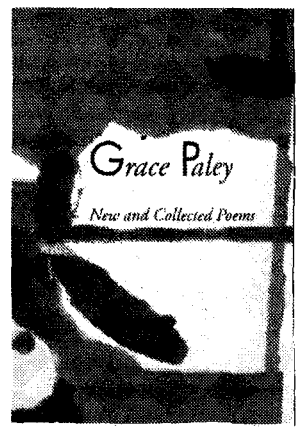

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chance to start on a shoestring budget and flourish—Wolff's example is impossible to follow.

The romantic publisher aims to capture what Hazlitt called the spirit of the age. This requires genius, in Hazlitt's sense of that word, and Wolff had it. Publishing at its best is a conspiracy of publisher with author to create cultural capital, to make something new come into the world. It does not have as much to do with the creation of capital of the dollars and cents, marks and pfennigs, variety, so there is need for a sense beyond cents if publisher and author working together are to add a mite to the world. The Goliaths of publishing, says this David, want results in the short run, but that is exactly the wrong expectation to have about important books: "It is usually the best and most estimable works which find little or no echo immediately and must wait for one."

Wolff knew whereof he spoke. When he published Kafka, the first printing of 800 copies did not run out for five years. Patience, and a special sensitivity, is required to coax the unborn and unthought into existence. The publisher doing his or her job aright has less in common with the tax collector than with Walter Benjamin's portrait of the collector: "The collector's passion is his divining rod and turns him into a finder of new sources." These new sources may be hidden away from the public eye. Wolff would agree with Ted Solotaroff's judgment, as set forth in *The Nation* last year [see "The Paperbacking of Publishing," October 7, 1991], that the publisher should not be a packager and that what Solotaroff calls book culture is infinitely preferable to product culture, the frantic but dull repackaging of known quantities, proven box-office hits. Kurt Wolff puts it like this: "Either you publish books you think people *ought* to read, or books you think people *want* to read. Publishers in the second category, publishers, that is to say, who slavishly cater to the public's tastes, do not count in our scheme of things—would not you agree? . . . For publishing activity of this kind you need neither enthusiasm nor taste. You simply supply the products for which there is a demand." This is not to live up to the name publisher, which suggests that the job is to make public what is not yet public, or even to have the imagination to realize that there are some talents that would prefer to avoid the public.

But the marvel of this book is that Wolff shows us the real cost to the publisher of succeeding in such transactions. The publisher must pay not in dollars but in attitude for a Kafka or a Kraus to entrust his treasures to him. That attitude is absolute charity: "A publisher's relationship with his author must be like a love affair in which he asks nothing and has already forgiven every failing in advance: both small lapses and—as is always possible—unfaithfulness on a large scale." Many of the best writers of our century—the twentieth, nothing random about it—trusted Wolff. Not for him the spider's stratagem of catching your prey in the fine print of the contract. For example, Wolff describes why the next-book clause cannot be the only glue holding author to publisher: "I happen not to believe in options; in dealings between an author and publisher I consider them immoral. . . . A human being . . . particularly a creative artist, should and must never become the object of such horse trading. . . . A writer should be able to change publishers as he sees fit." And again: "Contracts should not impinge on an author's freedom." Some of the most affecting scenes in the book come in letters in which he wishes an author well with a next publisher and says so in so eloquent a manner that you believe he meant it. It is this consistency that proves his virtue and makes plain the moral of the story, which is that you cannot act charitable, sweet and humble to win one book from a sensitive author like Kafka or another from the cactuslike Kraus and then be a bastard to others. You must be charitable, must be a prince all the time, or not bother trying.

Wolff did not worry about the things that do not matter, like the publishing houses he was building—eight of them between 1908 and 1963—which, as the record shows, he was willing to abandon. It was to the authors he stayed true. In that relationship between author and publisher the spark will fly and set the whole motor in motion: If that interplay is dynamic enough, out of it new capital will emerge.

Was he faultless? Of course not. He made his share of mistakes and is not afraid to tell us about them and let them tell on him. The most spectacular of his gaffes is the story of why and how he decided not to publish Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. He turned the book down, declining even to see the manuscript, based on his reading of a proposal from Spengler. He quotes in full

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a long letter from Spengler of the sort every publisher sees many of, and reveals the very human reasons why he passed up the opportunity to publish Spengler's blockbuster historical epic. Wolff is not, thank God, repentant. He says he would do it all over again if such a letter came in over the transom—a letter too long, too boastful, too boring in its boastfulness and written in a handwriting Wolff found distasteful! "You were silly like us; your gift survives it all."

Wolff devotes a chapter to the writer and analyst Lou-Andreas Salomé [see Gwyneth Cravens, "Past Present," March 2]. She inspired writers just as Wolff himself did, and he identifies with her, although he never makes that thought explicit. She is like the best publisher in her "total lack of a need to seek limelight." This, he remarks, is "a form of modesty which has its own greatness." So it does; so it does. He is a model to all publishers. □

The View From Inside

ELIAS VLANTON

DEADLINE. *By James Reston. Random House. 525 pp. $25.*

James (Scotty) Reston retired in 1987 with two Pulitzers, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and a well-earned reputation as the most influential reporter of his generation. Reston calls his recent memoir, *Deadline*, a "love letter to America." Like most love letters, this one should never have been dropped into the mail.

After a childhood in Scotland and Ohio, marriage to his college sweetheart and a stint as a sports reporter, Reston joined the Washington bureau of *The New York Times* in 1944. *Deadline* is largely composed of short chapters on people and episodes in his subsequent forty-three years in the nation's capital. In those chapters Reston gives us the World According to Washington. The "decisive point in the politics of the twentieth century [was] the emergence of the United States from isolation to the protection of Western civilization," Reston observes at one point. Elsewhere he writes that the job of the Washington press corps was to report "the mysteries of how the United States avoided a third world war and led the Alliance to the liberation of Europe, first from the Nazis and later from the Communists"—a rewriting of history that absolves the United States of any responsibility for forty years of nuclear brinkmanship.

Every hero needs a villain, and for Reston the Soviet Union was Public Enemy No. 1. Reston makes it appear that Moscow's actions were based on a devilish urge to provoke Washington. He deplores Soviet aggression in attempting to deploy missiles in Cuba, for example, but never mentions that this occurred long after the United States based nuclear missiles in Turkey. Twice, he offers as evidence of Soviet malevolence its refusal "to join the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe," but he forgets to add that the Marshall Plan was formulated so as to preclude Soviet participation. Reston describes Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin as being "almost as harsh as Stalin" because he had the audacity to accuse the United States, during our war in Vietnam, of "whipping up a military psychosis in the world." Reston adds that he never had "a single calm objective conversation with a single Soviet official." No wonder.

Contrary to Reston's observation elsewhere that "the conflict between the men who make and the men who report the news is as old as time," *Deadline* shows how Washington journalists and politicians often promote each other's agendas. One such famous incident was Senator Arthur Vandenberg's January 1945 speech renouncing isolationism. After Vandenberg asked the *Times* correspondent to read a draft of the speech, Reston told him that it was incomplete and offered his own view that a postwar alliance among the United States, the U.S.S.R., France and Britain was needed. In *Deadline* Reston says he "was as surprised as everybody else" when Vandenberg proposed such an alliance in his speech. But Reston's role in building anticipation for the speech, thus contributing to its importance, is not mentioned in *Deadline*. His *Times* piece published the day of Vandenberg's delivery (but written the day before) solemnly said that the speech had been "drafted not in a partisan sense" but to put "American force behind American principles in the interests of a lasting peace." Reston also praised the speech in subsequent articles, and would write three years later—with no ev-

Elias Vlanton is a freelance journalist in Washington, D.C.

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ident irony—that "the important thing about that speech . . . was not that Vandenberg made it but that the American people responded to it with such enthusiasm." Both men benefited from their collaboration; the publicity promoted Vandenberg's presidential aspirations, while Reston demonstrated his power to advance the career of a Washington politician. (The tactic was evidently classic Reston. In a flattering *Time* cover story in 1960 on Reston, the magazine said he "sometimes plants his own stories. He will think through his own plan for a course of action, then ask the appropriate source about it, get the source's assurance that the plan will be considered, then write a story reporting that the matter is under consideration.")

The chapter on the release of the Yalta papers provides an even clearer example of how Reston and the officials he was covering worked in concert to achieve mutual objectives. In March 1953, Reston was upset to learn that the State Department intended to send copies of the minutes of the Yalta Conference to members of Congress. He feared that some senators would selectively use the documents to fuel their charge that Roosevelt had "sold out" Eastern Europe at Yalta. Reston warned Secretary of State John Foster Dulles that it would be wrong to have the papers leaked out "piecemeal by politicians who wished to make political capital out of them," and "if there ever was a case for the so-called calculated leak I thought this was it." Dulles was convinced, Reston got a copy of the Yalta papers that evening and the Washington bureau began frantically cabling the 834 pages to New York before other papers demanded their own copies.

Reston didn't ask for release of the material in the name of history or the people's right to know; rather he argued the political benefits of the release for the Administration. If the national interest is served one day by publishing information to blunt an attack by the Republican right, it can be served the next day by withholding information to blunt an attack by the left. Reston never wrote about the C.I.A.'s U-2 reconnaissance flights over the Soviet Union, even though he says he knew about them months before pilot Gary Powers was shot down in 1960, precipitating a major diplomatic crisis. Since the Soviet government, as Reston tells us, was aware of and had formally protested the flights, the only people unaware of them were those in whose name they were being flown—the American people.

Reston was not an opportunistic hack; he was considered by colleagues one of the most independent Washington journalists of his generation and was extremely adept at constructing the big story from reluctantly released bits of information. But the day-to-day squabbles over one leak or another cannot allow us to forget that conflicts between a journalist such as Reston and his sources were not based on disagreement on the fundamental goal of U.S. foreign policy—American supremacy—but on whether certain policies were effective in achieving that goal.

Reston could not be both a Washington insider and independent.

Deadline gives us the author's version of the oft-repeated story of how the *Times* altered the layout and content of a Tad Szulc story of April 7, 1961, on the impending Bay of Pigs invasion. Reston thought the word "imminent" should be deleted (it was) since his own information was that the invasion was a week away. He thought "imminent was a prediction and not a fact." What is disingenuous about his account, however, is his claim that during the intervening eleven-day period he wrote a couple of columns "denouncing the whole affair." He *was* critical of the Kennedy Administration's Cuba policy during this time, but not because the United States was planning to intervene in Cuba's affairs. Rather, he believed that the Administration had failed to prime the public properly on Cuba's "threat" to U.S. security. "The self-interest of the nation undoubtedly requires the overthrow of the Cuban Government of Fidel Castro," Reston wrote plainly on April 12, and, while treaty obligations would complicate this endeavor, he thought that perhaps "overriding questions of national security are involved in Cuba and that, in these days of subversion and indirect aggression, these things justify the pursuit of national security without regard to national laws or international treaties." That was Reston's "denunciation" of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

After becoming Washington bureau chief in 1953, Reston assigned a reporter to cover Senator Joe McCarthy, whom he calls a "two-bit demagogue." In short order the Wisconsin Senator publicly denounced this man, Clayton Knowles, as a former Communist. "There was no evidence of bias in the reporter's work," Reston tells us, "but he admitted that the charge was true." (*Deadline* does not mention that Knowles had left the Communist Party in 1939—fifteen years earlier.) Firing Knowles was too drastic, Reston wrote the *Times*'s managing editor, but he acknowledged that Knowles "has forfeited the confidence of this bureau and cannot continue to do the kind of work expected of him here." The reporter was "ordered . . . back to New York," Reston tells us, "where he did excellent work until he retired." Actually, for the next two years Knowles was given the clerical task of compiling the daily news summary and index; then he lingered on the metro desk until retirement.

Reston does admit that many "came out of the McCarthy period feeling vaguely guilty," and that the *Times* was "intimidated much of the time by the popularity of McCarthy's lies and his charges that his opponents were 'soft on communism.' " These regrets, while noble, are misplaced. If Knowles was a competent reporter—even senators on the Internal Security Subcommittee believed he was—so what if he had once been a Communist? Or even still was? Had Reston and the *Times* defended Knowles, it might have blunted the Congressional witch hunt of the press two years later, in which several *Times* employees lost their jobs and the careers of several journalists were ruined. The transfer of Knowles indicates the degree to which the national security partnership overshadowed journalism's commitment to an independent perspective.

In 1961, President Kennedy asked Reston to write, on his own authority, that the United States would counter any Soviet moves in Berlin. After Reston cleared it with his editors and after President Kennedy himself approved the text, Khrushchev was told to watch his step "unless he wishes to preside over a Soviet wasteland." Although Reston now expresses regret over this incident, he fails to acknowledge his limited maneuverability. Had he been unwilling to serve as White House messenger, Kennedy would have found a more compliant reporter at the *New York Herald Tribune* or *The Washington Post* and Reston's insider status would have declined. Had he proclaimed in his column that threatening a nuclear holocaust over events in Berlin was not only unjust but immoral, his credentials

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as an insider would have been revoked.

By the time of his retirement Scotty Reston had seen more front-line action as a scribe for the American Century than most journalists, gaining great political influence. Yet he could not escape the contradiction of journalism in the nation's capital. He could not be both a Washington insider and independent. It's a hellish contradiction for journalists; the only thing worse is that the public, perhaps unaware, relies on their version of the news. □

MUSIC.

GENE SANTORO

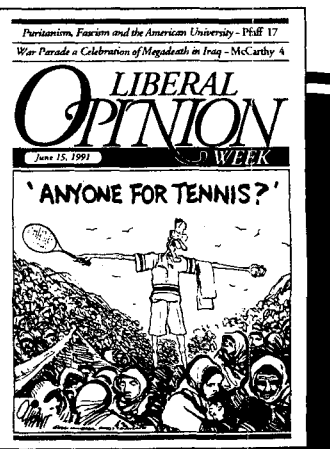
Confessin' the Blues

Blues may be nothin' but a feelin', but it's also a far more flexible and varied genre than many folks think. Reconstructions from folklore and recordings suggest that each region of the South, where the blues was born of work songs, developed its own twist. The Piedmont area's ragtime guitarists, like Blind Blake, adapted piano and banjo stylings to their instrument with dazzling results. The Mississippi Delta's "deep" combo of passionate vocals and finger-picked bottleneck guitar chords and lines yielded a sound that threads from the turn of the century up through Robert Johnson and migrants like Muddy Waters. Like many other Mississippians, Waters trekked to Chicago during World War II, where he electrified his delta heritage while parsing its usual solo or duo over a tightly plotted band format. The Texas blues' emphasis on single-string guitar work as call-and-response to the vocals, from Blind Lemon Jefferson through Lightnin' Hopkins and T-Bone Walker, helped launch virtuoso guitarist-vocalists like B.B. King, Albert King, Freddie King, Otis Rush, Magic Sam, Guitar Slim, Buddy Guy and Albert Collins. Riding the increasingly important radio waves, they overrode old regional distinctions as they regularized the music's format. In the process, they forged the models for the host of guitar-hero blues artists, most of them white, many of them British, who've dominated our notion of blues for the last twenty-five years or so.

The current blues revival, like its predecessors in the sixties and seventies, has clearly expanded the music's audience. Something about the blues' good-time boozy feel (promoters like the music because they usually make out exceptionally well on bar receipts) yields a good turnout, almost regardless of who's playing. There are still some outstanding blues survivors, like Buddy Guy and Albert King, although even they are (and have long been) erratic on stage—brilliant and riveting one night, bored and distracted the next. But there are also legions of young pretenders: swaggering white-boy guitar hero wannabes like Tinsley Ellis; in-the-delta-traditionalists like John Campbell; and dozens of bar bands who regularly pass through New York clubs like Manny's Car Wash and Brothers, not to mention the club scenes in Chicago, San Francisco, Austin and Atlanta. Most of them are no better than you'd expect—all form and caricatured emotion. It's almost as if they know the blues' time at the forefront of American musical evolution is long since gone.

But as with past blues revivals, the best part of this one is that it's helping bring lots of fine old recordings back into print. Of course, the fact that catalogue sales are what's fueling record-label profitability during this, uh, recovery helps too. And it didn't hurt that last year's *Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings* (Columbia/Legacy) has, for all its flaws, sold "well in excess of half a million copies worldwide," according to a Sony spokesperson. The recently released boxed sets described below can't hope to duplicate that feat, any more than Michael Jackson's *Dangerous* will catch up to *Thriller*'s stratospheric sales. But they do let folks who get turned on by a performance at, say, the Benson & Hedges Blues Festival double back to the sources of what they've seen.

Although not actually a boxed set, the individual albums *King of the Delta Blues* and *Masters of the Delta Blues* (both Yazoo), taken together with *Founder of the Delta Blues* (Yazoo), make a solid introduction to the Mississippi Delta's deep blues. The "King" and "Founder" is Charley Patton. Like Jelly Roll Morton in jazz and Elvis Presley in rock and roll, Patton stands near enough to the form's beginnings to be seen as a kind of avatar—a point Robert Palmer in his excellent book *Deep Blues* (Viking) has developed into a thesis about the music's historical development from African cultural carry-overs to proto-rock. Patton's emotionally expressive, gravelly voice with its fluid dynamics; his guitar's supporting web of pizzicato and slide chords and figures; his ways of borrow-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ing and recasting the material of others; his exuberant showmanship—banging on his guitar, playing it behind his back, stomping his feet to create counter-rhythms for the dancers at juke joints, and so on—were the initial inspiration for admirers like Son House, Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf.

The *Founder* disc collects Patton's blues performances from 1929 to 1934, when he was recording for H.C. Speir, a Mississippi record-store owner who served as Paramount's regional scout for what were then called "race" records. Although by the end the heart disease that killed him at age 43 had weakened his once-awesome voice and limited his instrumental abilities, most of the tracks cut through the inevitable lo-fi sound to suggest just how incredibly powerful a performer he must have been. *King* completes the portrait by gathering his remaining blues sides and sprinkling in his gospel work, some of it duets with Bertha Lee, the woman he was living with when he died. (Patton's apparent willingness to move back and forth between the sacred and Devil's realms, and the conviction he brought to both, was, like Huddie Ledbetter's, relatively unusual among blues artists.) The detailed notes by Patton biographer Stephen Calt (his *King of the Delta Blues* is available by mail order from Shanachie Records, P.O. Box 208, Newton, NJ 07860, for $14.95 plus $2 postage) are informative if sometimes a bit insiderish.

Masters compiles what its subtitle only a little misleadingly calls *The Friends of Charley Patton*. Most of the recorded artists, like Willie Brown and Lee, were indeed either Patton's friends or mistresses; some, like Tommy Johnson and Bukka White, B.B. King's country cousin who got him started on the blues, were simply influenced by him or covered his tunes. Quibbling aside, this CD's twenty-three cuts offer some vital context and demonstrate some of the ways Patton's deep blues became an elastic template that allowed others to discover their own interpretive ways. Son House, for instance, formulated a contrapuntal bottleneck attack out of Patton's that had an enormous impact on Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters, and thus indirectly on postwar electric Chicago blues and rock. Tommy Johnson developed a sort of moan that Howlin' Wolf later combined with white bluesman Jimmie Rodgers's famed blue yodel to create his own trademark howl. (As B.B. King once pointed out to me, Rodgers was the only white country-blues artist black audiences and musicians consistently listened to.) With Don Kent's useful notes, and taken as a quasi-box with the two Patton discs, *Masters* should grab anybody who's got more than a passing curiosity about the nature of Mississippi Delta blues.

Like Guthrie, with whom he was often paired, Leadbelly was beyond received categories.

Huddie Ledbetter wasn't a product of the delta; a child of the Texas-Louisiana border, he was sui generis. A set of three CDs—*Midnight Special*, *Gwine Dig a Hole to Put the Devil In*, *Let It Shine on Me* (all on Rounder)—are part of Rounder's excellent, if sonically uneven, series of reissues of Library of Congress recordings. Leadbelly (or Lead Belly, as this set's annotator spells it, following the usage of the 1930s) was almost a walking illustration of the mythic Bluesman: a wanderer, a womanizer, a hard-driving partygoer and entertainer, and twice a convict doing hard labor for murder and assault. (The departures from this myth—that his father had worked his way from sharecropper to landowner, that young Huddie got to attend school, unlike the vast majority of his peers—were usually elided.) Born at the dawn of the blues era, like Patton and Blind Lemon Jefferson, who was apparently his running buddy and playing partner for years, he lived, unlike them, to become an important part of the folk-blues revival that started in the 1940s.

In 1933, John and Alan Lomax were traveling around the South on a mission from the Library of Congress: to find and record folk musicians, a part of the larger documentation of U.S. culture by the government that employed artists, writers and photographers. When their search took them to Angola State Penitentiary in Louisiana, they found Ledbetter and used his music to help secure his release. It was the second time Leadbelly's music had gotten his prison time cut: During his earlier Texas stint he'd also penned a tune to the governor that pleaded for clemency. An extraordinary ploy by any standard, its success provides some measure of the force of both his personality and his music.

This set's extraordinary musical riches, fleshed out with informative notes by Kip Lornell of the Smithsonian, pulsates with that force. Leadbelly's voice is big and flexible, smooth but with an always present touch of pain. Self-described as "King of the Twelve-String Guitar," he more than lived up to his billing: His remarkably deft touch carries him from deceptively simple strummed accompaniments that turn on shifts in internal voicing to obviously virtuoso backing figures that combine bottleneck and finger-picking with an impact rivaled by only a few other greats like Robert Johnson. Like the Patton CDs, these three indicate how reductive our contemporary sense of the blues has become. As a working performer, Leadbelly ransacked sources and styles for whatever made people react, dance, pay. So Anglo-American folk material sits alongside modified work songs, formulaic blues and protest tunes like "Bourgeois Blues," in which the singer-guitarist lists the racist offenses he encountered during a trip to Washington, D.C., to record for the Library of Congress. Like Woody Guthrie, with whom he was often paired during the Depression era, Leadbelly was beyond received categories; his body of work created one of its own.

By contrast, Lightnin' Hopkins stuck close to the framework of the down-home country Texas blues he learned at the feet of Blind Lemon Jefferson, whom he accompanied as a boy, until the end of his life. *The Complete Aladdin Recordings* (EMI), a two-CD box, captures his earliest sessions from the late 1940s, first with pianist "Thunder" Smith (which is why Sam Hopkins got tagged as Lightnin'), then as a soloist. His laconic, slightly scratchy, dark-toned voice plays cat-and-mouse with his formidable single-string riffing on guitar. Within that idiom, Hopkins improvised constantly—his ability to extemporize lyrics about happenings around him even during a show is legendary, as annotator Pete Welding points out. The flip side is that many, maybe most, of his tunes are derivative, even repetitive: recombinant versions of pre-existing material that he makes his own (most of the time) through the power of his ominous performances. Only rarely does a Hopkins song have the kind of calculated development of one by Leadbelly or Robert Johnson. But they weave

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a compelling, visceral mood despite their more limited palette.

The Complete Prestige/Bluesville Recordings (Fantasy), seven CDs in all, captures Hopkins in the early 1960s, when he, like Son House, Skip James, Mississippi John Hurt and other country bluesmen, had been "rediscovered" and incorporated into the burgeoning folk scene. What the folkies wanted from him—an "authentic" reversion to acoustic-guitar accompaniment, for example—soon mutated into dubbing bass and drums onto his solo tracks. Because Hopkins was such a down-home stylist, he was simply behaving normally when he shortened or lengthened verses, but for the studio musicians backing him, his erratic as-I-feel-it shifts meant having to devise a neutral, protective coloration for accompaniment. That translates very quickly into a bland sameness that lacks the redeeming spell of his unaccompanied work. As a result, the two most consistently interesting CDs of this set are atypical. One carries forty-plus minutes of an interview by blues historian Sam Charters, who tracked Hopkins down in the 1950s. The other is the previously unreleased live set at Swarthmore College in 1963; as Charters puts it in his evocative, fact-filled notes, "The concert captured Lightning at his beguiling best with an audience. Here he is as the blues minstrel—telling stories, creating sweeps of sound with the guitar, picking at the audience's emotions with the emotions of his blues."

Touch a blues fanatic and you're likely to get an encomium to Chester Arthur Burnett, or Howlin' Wolf. That's partly because Wolf, like any of the great bluesmakers, knew how to whip a crowd into a frenzy simply by pulling out all the stops. Whereas Hopkins is about shadowy recesses, Wolf, though far from unsubtle musically, flaunts his personality. His live performances became famous because this huge man would roll on his back, climb the stage curtains, do whatever it took to shake a crowd up. *Howlin' Wolf* (MCA/Chess), a three-CD box, distills much of that fiercely vibrant essence, thanks to its thoughtful track selections, recorded interview snippets, copious and slyly intelligent notes by blues authority Dick Shurman, and good sound. In the process, it scans Wolf's twenty-two-year recording career, tracing how he, like Muddy Waters, his great Chicago rival, reshaped and electrified the sounds of his native delta blues for a postwar urban audience.

And yet, as historian Peter Guralnick wrote a decade ago in *The Listener's Guide to the Blues* (Facts on File):

> After he came to Chicago, his music changed a little. His bands became tighter and perhaps in the process a little less adventurous. He experimented with horns, moved away from the boogie music of Memphis [which comprises much of this set's first CD] and established a characteristic slow-rocking groove. Unlike Muddy Waters's, though, his style did not particularly evolve. No matter who was in his band, no matter how outstanding the individual musicians, the focus was always Wolf, and *he* was always the Wolf, singing, talking, playing in that inimitable style, growling in that hoarse rasp that could be mistaken for no one else, alternating a fierce attack with a surprising delicacy of phrasing and dynamics.

Wolf's deepest expressivity poured out into his specialty, the slow-to-mid-tempo but turbocharged one-chord tunes like "Smokestack Lightning." While the intersecting rhythmic lines sway with a paradoxically loose intensity, his voice makes like a dolphin at glorious play, riding the erratic wave crests, dipping under and cutting through the surface with a graceful lack of repetition that is breathtaking. Sporting Hubert Sumlin's angular, eccentric guitar, Wolf's music kills.

In a certain sense, Wolf—like Muddy, like Lightnin'—closed the blues' historical circle. Born in the Mississippi Delta, he'd learned tunes and nonstandard tunings from Charley Patton (though he was never much good at guitar) and harp (which he became achingly good at) from his brother-in-law Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller); and he lived to record and play for young, mostly white audiences with electric blues revivalists like Eric Clapton and the Rolling Stones, who revered him and his music. (His bizarre appearance on the TV show *Shindig* in 1965 was due to the Stones, and started at least a few young rockers to wondering who the hell this lunatic with the vocalic harp, the bloodcurdling rasp and moan, the weird name and criminally intense music *was*, exactly.) By the time Wolf died in 1976, the great 1960s blues revival had dwindled mostly to a guitar hero's chance to swagger through clichéd pyrotechnics and overlong solos. The blinding, mesmerizing force of blues like Wolf's—a kind of hypnotizing hurricane exploding out of a particular personality—would be lost from the stage, maybe for all time, except for isolated magical moments. □

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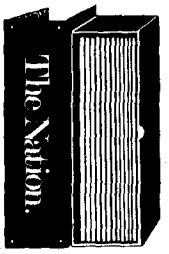

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LETTERS.

(*Continued From Page 326*)

tic material in close detail before I dared criticize this fixture of the left. I have not swung at straw but at Christic's own statements, such as those in the *Declaration of Plaintiffs' Counsel*, a 300-page conspiracy theorist's wet dream, which the group filed in court in 1988. It is full of errors and unsubstantiated assertions, and—for what it's worth—was laughed out of federal court. I wrote about the mistakes at length in these pages (and was too polite) ["Is There Really a 'Secret Team'?" July 2/9, 1988]. But I guess that student volunteer in Los Angeles knows better—and also knows better than the two named plaintiffs of the Christic lawsuit, journalists Martha Honey and Tony Avirgan. The couple broke with Christic and do not endorse its theory. The Casey statement is a wonderful line for a give-us-money solicitation (something the institute is very good at) and I don't want to burst their bubble, but Casey said he thought Christic *could* be dangerous. That's hardly an endorsement: Spies don't like scrutiny, on target or off.

Much of the message and specific material put out by Christic has been wrong and occasionally even slanderous. I have granted the group credit for focusing on an important topic: covert government. Its lawsuit did zero in on some people related to the Iran/*contra* affair, so the institute earns points for getting something right. But its ill-fated and tremendously costly lawsuit accused some of these people of involvement in assassinations and drug running without anything resembling proof. Their targets are hardly types that attract sympathy from the left—former C.I.A. officers, *contra* supporters and the like—but they still should not be frivolously subjected to such charges. Defenders of the institute excuse its excesses by noting that its heart is in the right place and that no one else takes on this sort of work. Politically correct motives are not good enough. The most concrete achievement of the lawsuit was to transfer $1 million (and it may be more) from the funders of the institute to the lawyers for the defendants. Bruce Springsteen and Bonnie Raitt should be raising money for better causes and more responsible organizations. Truth matters. *David Corn*

ADDENDUM

Those interested in the films of Alexander Sokurov, reviewed by Stuart Klawans in the February 24 issue, can get information on screening dates and venues from International Film Circuit, 45 John Street, Suite 404, New York, NY 10038. Phone: (212) 349-3020.

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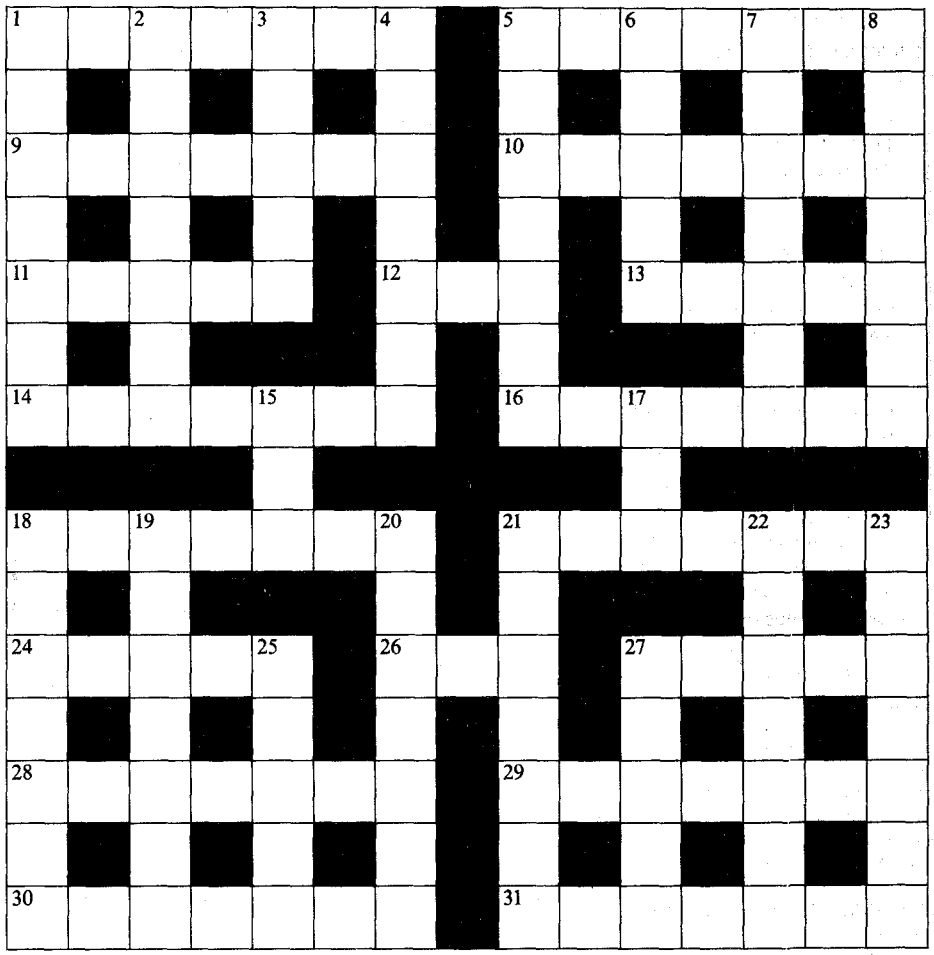
SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2373

S	O	L	D	I	E	R	S	■	T	R	Y	T	R	Y
O	■	A	■	F	■	E	■	A	■	O	■	R	■	I
A	P	P	L	A	U	D	■	G	L	U	C	O	S	E
P	■	S	■	T	■	U	■	H	■	S	■	U	■	L
S	H	E	A	F	■	C	H	A	S	T	I	S	E	D
U	■	■	■	I	■	E	■	S	■	■	■	S	■	S
D	E	C	O	R	■	D	E	T	E	S	T	E	D	■
S	■	O	■	S	■	■	■	■	■	I	■	A	■	P
■	A	N	A	T	O	M	I	C	■	G	R	U	E	L
A	■	F	■	■	■	A	■	A	■	N	■	■	■	A
B	E	L	I	T	T	L	E	R	■	A	G	A	I	N
U	■	I	■	H	■	A	■	R	■	T	■	B	■	K
S	U	C	C	E	E	D	■	Y	O	U	D	O	N	T
E	■	T	■	M	■	Y	■	O	■	R	■	U	■	O
S	Y	S	T	E	M	■	U	N	B	E	A	T	E	N

Crossword Puzzle No. 2374

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Servitude in the time of Double-O-Seven? (7)
5 One who charges? (7)
9 Characteristic of a slice of pie, before heavy reading. (7)
10 Bad old Porsena made some money, evidently. (7)
11, 13 and 12 A satisfactory golf game, with the sound of some considerable amount of money, perhaps. (1,4,5,3)
14 Give up? (If you did, you did!) (7)
16 Very big in the fall. (7)
18 Hounds, or other animals? (7)
21 See 15 down
24 The son is either obvious or a genuine American. (5)
26 See 3 down
27 Ready for a skirmish? (3-2)
28 Does one admit to being out-of-date? It might be hard to get over! (7)
29 Making 10, possibly. (7)
30 Some bloke! A slippery one, but rather polished! (7)
31 Not quite unnecessary points? (7)

DOWN

1 and 18 Sounds as though you should purchase decorative material for the kid, just before Dad looks for something to put it to sleep. (3,4,7)
2 Need what is disgusting here? On the contrary, I put a quantity on, already! (7)
3, 26 across and 25 down Duck, possibly and don't have anything to do with children! (5,3,5)
4 Botanically standing out of water, you might make it seem red. (7)
5 A bad sort, and a bad sign if you're thinking of your belly! (7)
6, 27 and 17 For example, blue material a so-called worker made for a soldier responsible for the flag. (5,8)
7 A personal sort of blade with the cup, alas, broken. (7)
8 Chemically or legally, what is left. (7)
15 and 21 across Pass on to such as painters and people who tell you what to eat! (10)
17 See 6
18 See 1
19 Where might you find it? Sink ship and see it wrecked! (7)
20 So-called poets who go down pretty fair with readers? (7)
21 What the rider might hold loosely is found inside. (7)
22 Obviously the workers made a pile this way. (A sort of hint surrounded by everything!) (7)
23 A few of them are supposed to be funny, and so get so confused they're really blind followers. (7)
25 See 3
27 See 6

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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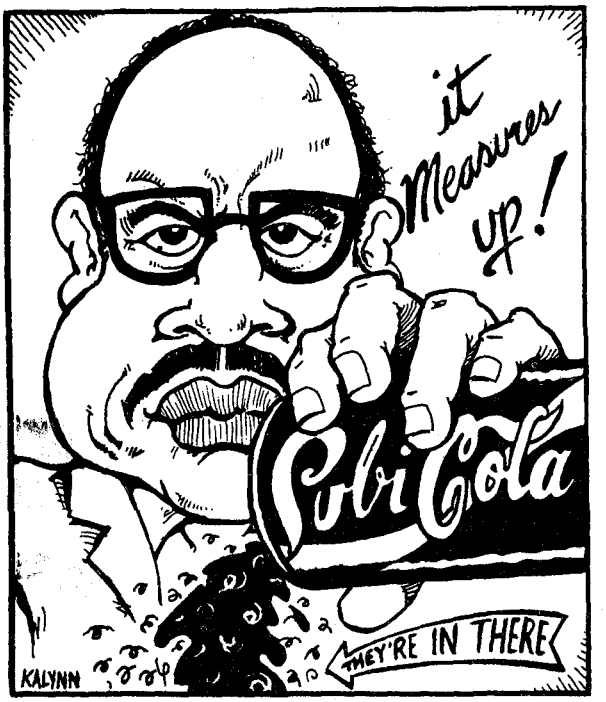

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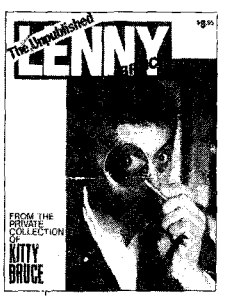

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